

September 1, 1961

MEMORANDUM TO: Mr. Robert J. Manning

Thanks very much for sending me the State Department's draft history of the Cuban crisis. This history pulls together a great deal of information, but in the nature of things it is necessarily incomplete, and to put it in final and authoritative form at this time would require the time and attention of a lot of people who are necessarily pre-occupied with other matters. So my suggestion is that this history be put in the appropriate files as a compilation which will be extremely useful to the makers of later and more authoritative accounts. Unless you have objections, we will keep the copy which you sent to me for this purpose in the President's files.

McGeorge Bundy

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Mr. Bundy —

I recommend you thank Manning for the fine work of pulling together the information in this paper and tell him the document will be put in the President's file for his future use.

There is so much work involved in making this paper right that I doubt it is worth doing. BKS

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

CO [REDACTED] L

January 9, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Bundy

SUBJECT : Cuba History

I spoke to Frank Sieverts in State regarding State's comprehensive history of the Cuba situation.

Mr. Sieverts told me that he is pulling together contributions from State, Defense and CIA and he expects to have his history pulled together by the end of next week. He added that he has some White House documents as well (e. g. ExCom meeting notes) and had planned to talk to you when he had all the material pulled together.

In light of the above, it would seem advisable to hold off on the appointment of a White House historian, at least until we have had a chance to look at Mr. Sieverts' work. If you agree, would you like me to pass the word to Mr. Schlesinger and Mr. Cooper?

yes

GC

Gordon Chase

-DECLASSIFIED	
U.S. ARCHIVIST (NLK-80-40)	
By <u>WJH</u>	NARS Date <u>11/21/81</u>

CO [REDACTED] L

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

August 22, 1963


~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. McGEORGE BUNDY  
THE WHITE HOUSE

Subject: History of the Cuban Crisis

Pursuant to our discussion of last November, and responding to your request, my Special Assistant, Frank Sieverts, has written a history of the Cuban missile crisis which is transmitted herewith. It is based on documents available in the State Department and additional material provided by the Department of Defense, the White House and the Central Intelligence Agency, as well as on personal interviews and private notes. Some of the sources are highly classified, and the entire history should be handled on a Top Secret - Eyes Only basis. It has not been widely cleared in the State Department or elsewhere.

When you have had a chance to read it, we should discuss what further disposition, if any, should be made of the paper. Your comments on it would also be most welcome.

  
Robert Manning  
Assistant Secretary

DECLASSIFIED

2025-01-11

By: [signature] NARS Date 6/85

Top Secret - Eyes Only  
Attachment:

THE CUBAN CRISIS, 1962.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~



2509  
Circa 5/22/63

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

THE CUBAN CRISIS, 1962

SANITIZED

BY:

Frank A. Sieverts  
Special Assistant  
to the

Assistant Secretary of State  
for Public Affairs


NLX-80-41

BY msm NARS, DATE 5/85

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
The Origins of the Crisis	1
Intelligence Background	7
	19
The First Days	32
The Meeting with Gromyko	54
Sunday, October 21: Transition from Planning to Action	78
Monday, October 22: The Crisis Goes Public	84
Tuesday, October 23: Success in the O.A.S.	112
Wednesday, October 24: The U.N. Holds the Stage	131
Thursday, October 25: Implementing the Quarantine	148
Friday, October 26: The Tension Mounts	165
Saturday, October 27: Grim News, Conflicting Signals	179
Sunday, October 28: The Tension Breaks	192
Epilogue	198

THE ORIGINS OF THE CRISIS

What has come to be called the Cuban crisis of October, 1962, had its roots in a decision by the leaders of the Soviet Union that the island in the Caribbean offered a hospitable location for offensive missiles and other weapons capable of transporting nuclear warheads swiftly to targets in the United States and central America. It can be assumed that the decision to pursue this course of action -- unprecedented in the nation that looks to Lenin for policy guidance -- was taken early in 1962. On January 10 of that year the Soviet news agency, TASS, announced that the Soviet Union and Cuba had signed a trade protocol for 1962, providing for a "considerable increase" in trade between the two countries. On the same day the former president of the

-2-

Cuban Communist party, Juan Marinello, was named rector of the University of Havana. At his inauguration, Marinello declared that all students at the university would be requested to study Marxist-Leninist principles. The Castro government also made public plans to launch a nationwide network of "Revolutionary Instruction Schools" for instruction in Marxism-Leninism.

Another indication took a somewhat different form. On March 26, 1962, Castro denounced Anibal Escalante, a long-time Cuban Communist leader who symbolized the old-line hard-core group within the party that for years had maintained close ties with Moscow. The significance of this action by Castro was to show Khrushchev and his associates that there remained little chance that the traditional Communists in Cuba would come to power. Ideologically,

Castro had already placed himself in the Marxist-Leninist camp. While the Soviet leaders may have retained doubts about his reliability, the attack on Escalante plainly convinced them that there was no longer any reason to postpone a major investment in the Castro regime.

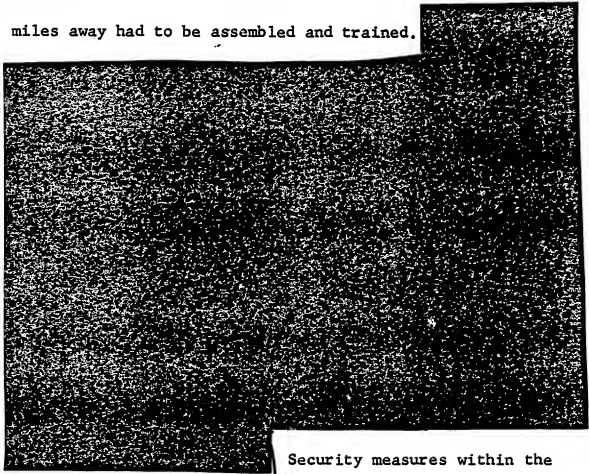
It is not known whether the initiative for the emplacement of offensive missiles and bombers in Cuba came from Castro or the Kremlin. It may have started as a request by Castro for ground-to-air anti-aircraft missiles of the type which the Soviets claimed brought down a high-flying U-2 photo reconnaissance plane over Russian territory in the spring of 1960. It now appears more probable that these weapons were supplied to Cuba by the Soviets primarily to provide anti-aircraft protection for the medium range and intermediate range missiles.

In one sense it is difficult to see what Castro would gain from the presence of offensive weapons on Cuban soil. All the IRBM and MRBM sites, both those constructed and those contemplated, were of the unhardened type, suitable only for first-strike use. They thus would make Cuba a prime target for pre-emptive United States military attack in any crisis anywhere in which use of the missiles seemed likely. By offering its territory to Soviet IRBM's and MRBM's capable of delivering nuclear warheads to targets in the United States, the Castro regime placed its own country and people in nuclear jeopardy.

Establishing a Soviet offensive striking force in Cuba was a logistic exercise of great scope conducted under conditions of drum-tight security. The missiles, bombers, and related systems had to be brought to secure

-5-

ports in the Soviet Union for loading onto ocean-going ships. Personnel to operate the missiles and to perform the many other functions connected with an effort of this size and character on a Spanish-speaking island thousands of miles away had to be assembled and trained.



Security measures within the Soviet Union appear to have been completely effective. The arms were under tight Soviet military supervision, first in the Soviet Union itself and aboard Soviet

-6-

ships, then in Cuba, where the offensive missiles and other weapons systems were unloaded by Soviet personnel in secure ports, some of them especially constructed for this purpose, and transported in Soviet-manned truck convoys to sites from which Cubans were excluded, then deployed and erected by Soviet crews. In addition, the Soviets sought to divert attention from missiles by frequently assuring us over a period of some months that there would be no offensive weapons in Cuba.

Once the missiles arrived in Cuba and had to be transported in trucks and other conveyances to their destined launch sites, fragmentary reports on them began to reach U.S. intelligence agencies. From that moment on, knowledge in the U.S. government about what might be happening in Cuba began to become abreast of events. The missile installations were located and described in considerable



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

-6a-

detail

[REDACTED] before the missiles were actually

capable of being fired. It is thought by some that no nuclear explosives were ever landed in Cuba. A ship suspected of transporting such warheads was en route to Cuba at the time of the Proclamation of Interdiction. It was one of those which turned around and returned to the Soviet Union. To be sure, nuclear warheads could be carried by air, but there is no indication as such that any

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

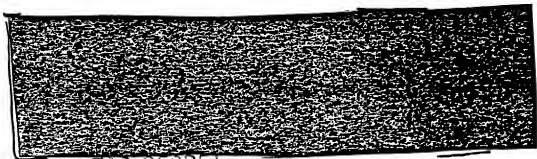
7.

were actually brought to Cuba. The missiles did not make sense without nuclear tips, and the U.S. Government had to assume the warheads were there, yet the possibility remains that none actually ever arrived.

Intelligence Background

From an American perspective, the Cuban crisis begins with the intelligence gathering procedures which made it possible to discover the existence of the offensive missiles and other Soviet arms shortly after their arrival in Cuba.

In late 1961 the intelligence community was instructed to increase its efforts to gather information about developments in Cuba. To accomplish that purpose, a number of steps were taken, among them these:



8.

[REDACTED]

This effort began before there was any indication of the massive Soviet arms build-up in Cuba; it was not related to it as such.

Until these steps were taken, and up to the end of March, 1962, the intelligence community and other high Government officials recognized that [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] It was expected that the measures adopted would provide significantly more information by July. It was this series of measures which placed the intelligence community in a position of readiness when the Soviet build-up began in late July and early August.

A broad range of intelligence sources was utilized [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Each type of source contributed to the intelligence mosaic.

[REDACTED]

9.

[REDACTED]

These had to be carefully sifted and evaluated but did  
yield some useful information.

[REDACTED]

A few scattered reports referring to missiles were  
received as early as 1961,

[REDACTED]

The few exceptions could not be confirmed or disproved by

[REDACTED] any other means. However, the [REDACTED]

evidence on conventional Soviet weaponry going to Cuba --


such as tanks, artillery, and aircraft -- was entirely

10.

consistent with other information available on arms shipments through the first half of 1962.

From mid-1962 on, a large volume of intelligence data was being received. Beginning in August, a small but growing percentage of the total concerned the secret influx of conventional weapons and related activities. A smaller but more rapidly growing portion proved when checked to refer to the introduction of defensive missiles. It was not until after mid-September that some bits of information were suggestive of Soviet offensive missiles, and they were not evaluated as such when first received.

There were a few reports of missiles in August, all of which were linked to SAM or cruise missile deployments or shown to be incorrect.



~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

56

11.



After

late August there were increasing numbers of such reports, as well as some on MIG-21's and IL-28's.

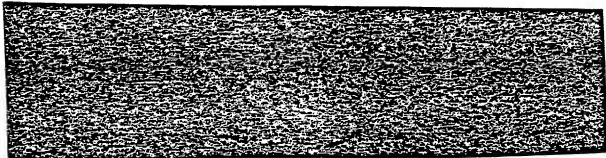
Various bits of information received by the end of August added up to a pattern that included: the arrival of a large number of bloc ships carrying military cargoes and several thousand bloc personnel; widespread and large-scale construction activity; convoys of Soviet trucks, frequently moving by night and carrying tubular objects; new restricted military areas from which Cuban residents had been evacuated; Soviet personnel supervising unloading of ships and the land

~~TOP SECRET~~

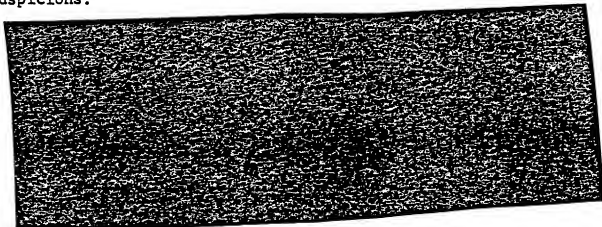
EYES ONLY

12.

transport of the cargo; and exclusively Soviet or bloc  
occupancy and control of the evacuated sites.



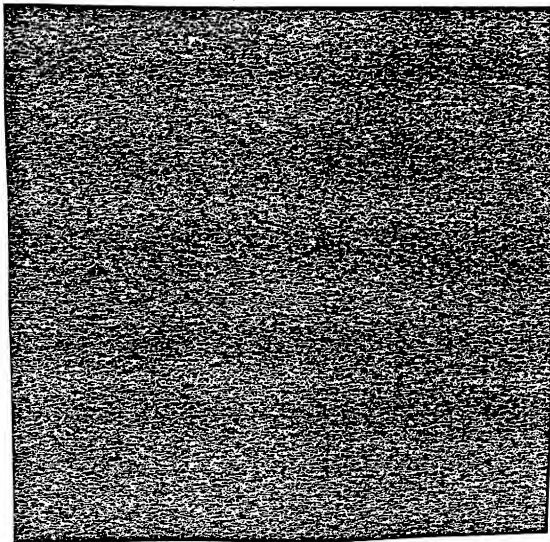
The first offensive missiles -- MRBM's -- probably did  
not arrive in Cuba until about September 8. Until mid-  
September there were no signs of this or of the Soviets  
intentions. After mid-September a few reports, of varying  
reliability and precision, were suggestive enough to arouse  
suspicions.




~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

13.



Internal Dissemination of Intelligence Information

Information on the Soviet arms build-up in Cuba was widely circulated in the intelligence community and to top-level policy officials of the Government. 

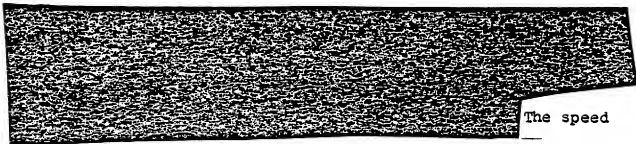
~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY



~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56


14.



The speed

of dissemination of information within the Government was high.


From early September there were some restrictions on dissemination of information within the Government about Soviet weapons in Cuba. These did not affect the flow of raw data to the analysts or to decision-making officials at the highest level. Quite apart from the restrictions, no information on offensive missiles available until October 15 was hard enough to permit writing of a credible item for dissemination.


The restrictions on dissemination ("publishing" within the intelligence community) were the result of an instruction from the Director of Central Intelligence that all reports relating to a possible Soviet arms build-up in Cuba should be subjected to  verification to the greatest possible

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

15.

extent. This was interpreted to mean that reports on this subject should not be "published" and thus brought to the attention of the normal recipients of intelligence data circulated within the Government unless they had been so verified.

The first instruction that intentionally restricted publication was issued at the end of August, when 

 some SAM sites and another site the nature of which could not be immediately determined (and which subsequent analysis showed to be a defensive cruise missile installation). On August 31, the President ordered that there be no publication within the intelligence community of this information until our course of policy was determined. ✓

The information continued to be available to intelligence analysts and a small number of top decision-makers. On September 4 the President publicly announced the presence of a missile defense system in Cuba. Thereafter, information

56

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

16.

on SAMs was disseminated in intelligence community publications.

In early October, firm evidence of a shipment of IL-28s going into Cuba was obtained. Because of the bomber's offensive capability, White House permission was needed to publish information on it within the intelligence community. It was granted, and the information was published on October 11.

At the time this permission was granted, the President directed the Director of Central Intelligence to put into effect a system of rigid control of information on offensive weapons. The U. S. Intelligence Board established a special classification system on October 12, which provided that information on offensive capabilities in Cuba should be disseminated "only to specific individuals on an EYES ONLY basis who by virtue of their responsibilities as advisors to the President have a need to know... There

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

56

17.

is no intent thereby to inhibit the essential analytic process."

This system stayed in effect until after the President's speech on October 22. Its effect within the intelligence community was to confine raw information on offensive weapons in Cuba to U.S. Intelligence Board principals and the analysts working directly on the problem.

The Estimates on Cuba

In January, March, August, and September, the intelligence community produced Estimates on Cuba. Each considered possibility of Soviet use of Cuba as strategic base; each concluded the Soviets would consider the risk of U.S. retaliation too great.

The Estimates were based on three basic calculations:

1. Soviet policy was to avoid a risk of confrontation

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

18.

which would run risks of losing Cuba or chance of war.

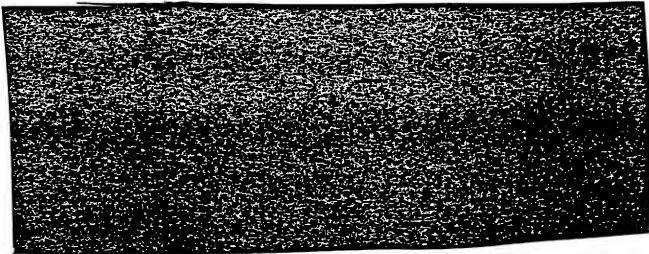
2. The Soviets hoped to win victory for communism by other than military means; this policy would be impaired by establishment of a strategic base on Cuba.

3. The Soviet military build-up as known to us before September 19, 1962, appeared consistent with these policies.

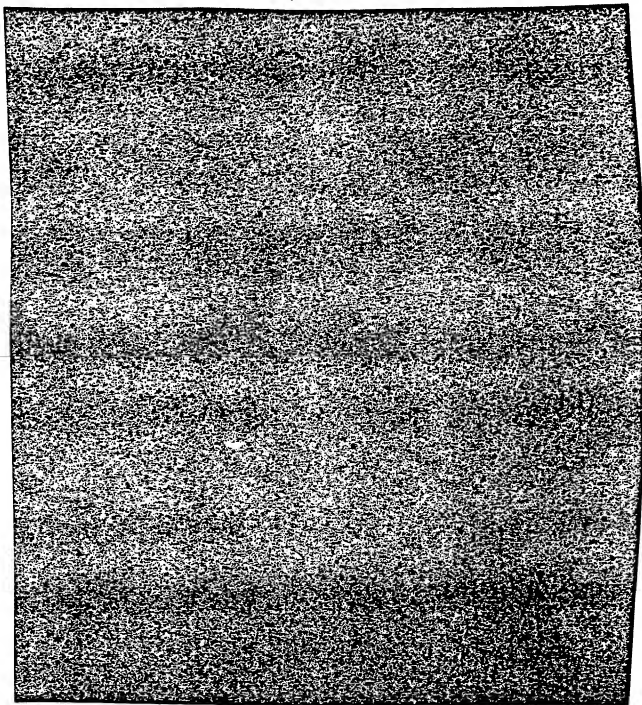
The September 19 Estimate viewed the <sup>purpose of</sup> military build-up as then known as being to strengthen the Cuban regime against presumed U. S. attempts to overthrow it. Air defense and coastal defenses increased Castro's security, thus his strength at home, and so permitted him to carry on more aggressive revolutionary activity in Latin America. The Estimate said that the Soviets might add weapons like submarines and light bombers of a more "offensive" character. It also stated that

19.

the Soviets could derive military advantage from placing medium or intermediate range ballistic missiles in Cuba, or from a submarine base. It considered the latter more likely, but considered both incompatible with Soviet practice to date. It pointed out that Latin Americans would fear and resent Soviet military intrusion into the Hemisphere and said that if it became clear the Soviets were establishing an offensive base in Cuba, most Latin American governments would expect the United States to eliminate it by whatever means were necessary.

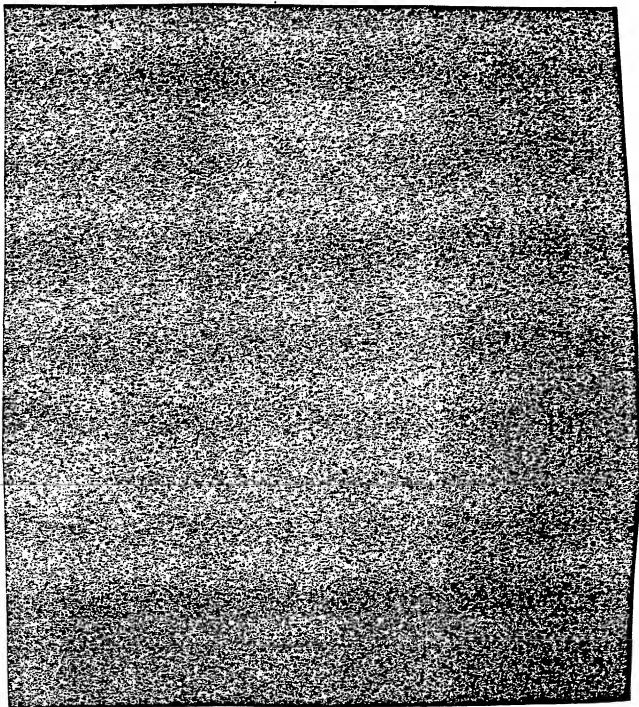


20.



~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

21.

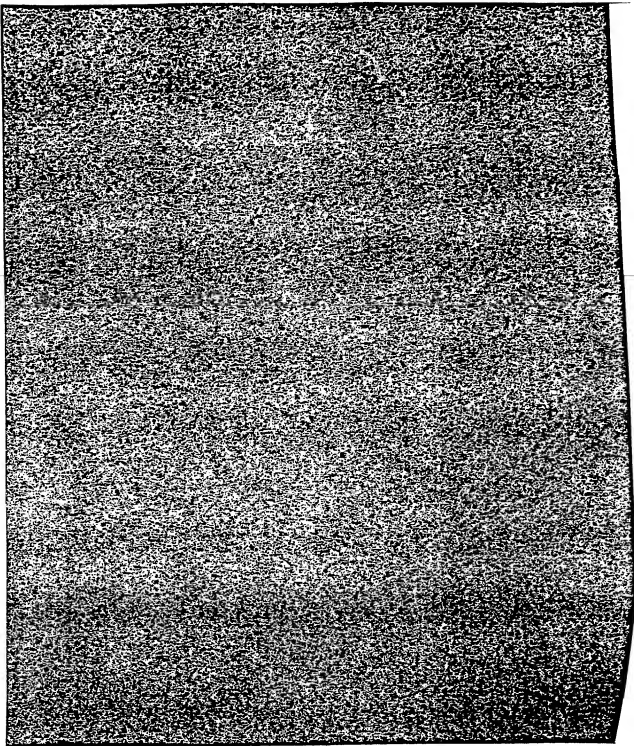


~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

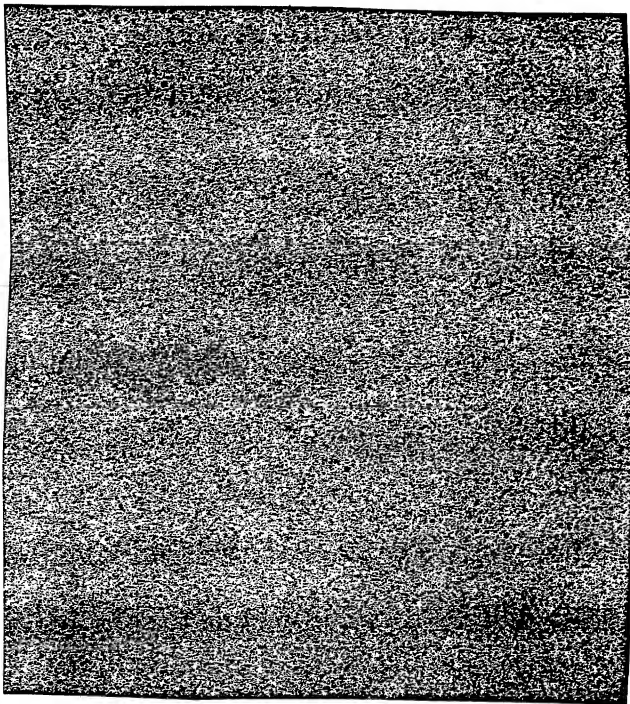


~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

22.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

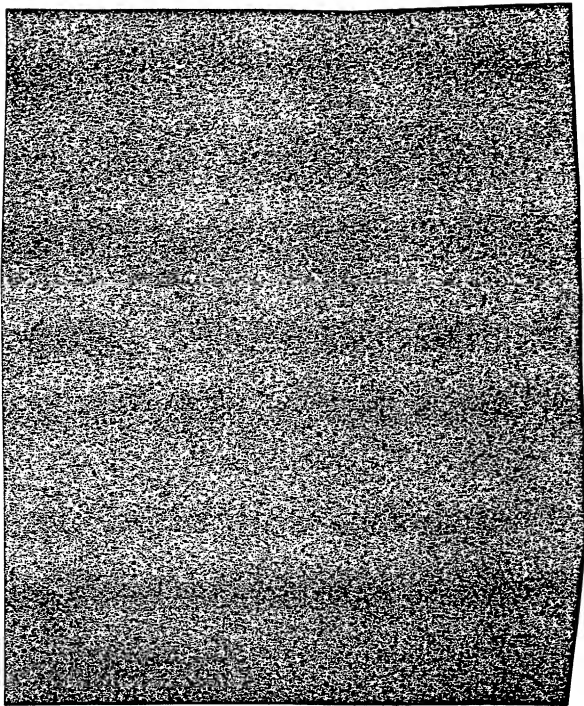
23.



~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

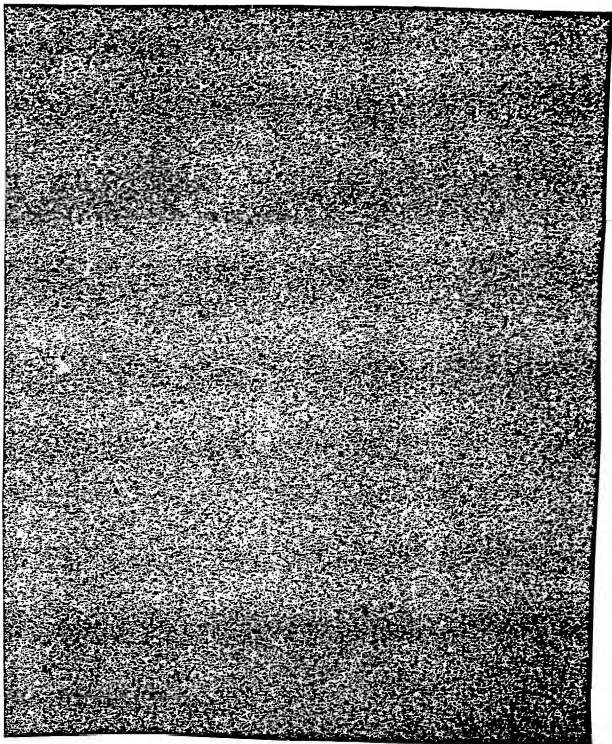
56

24.



~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

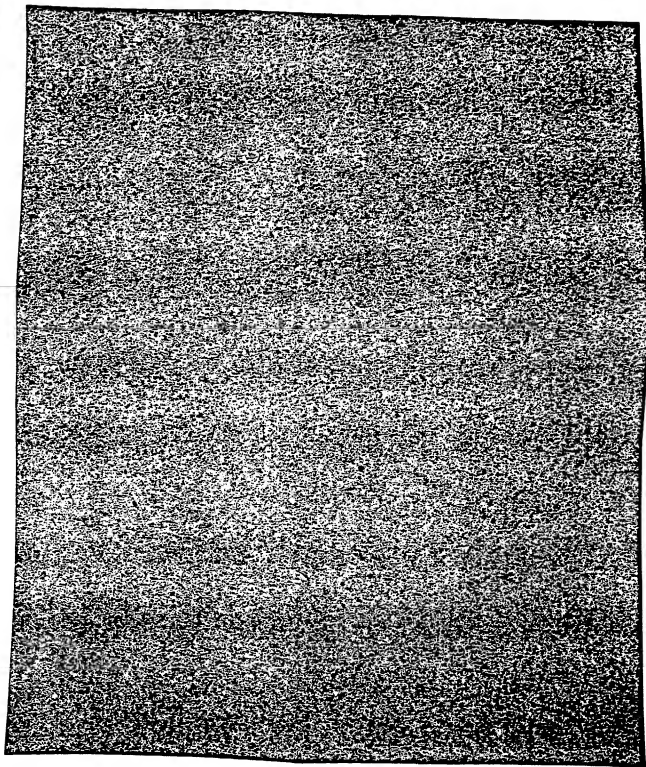


~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

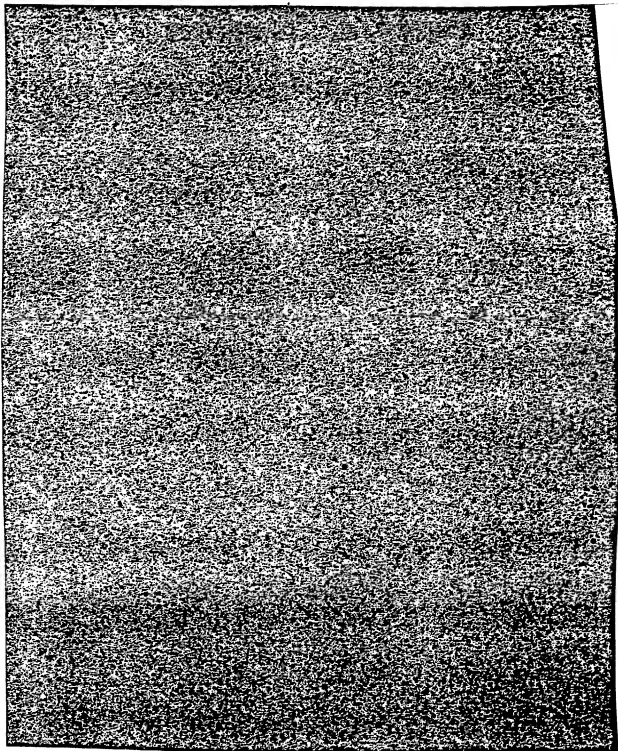
26.



~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

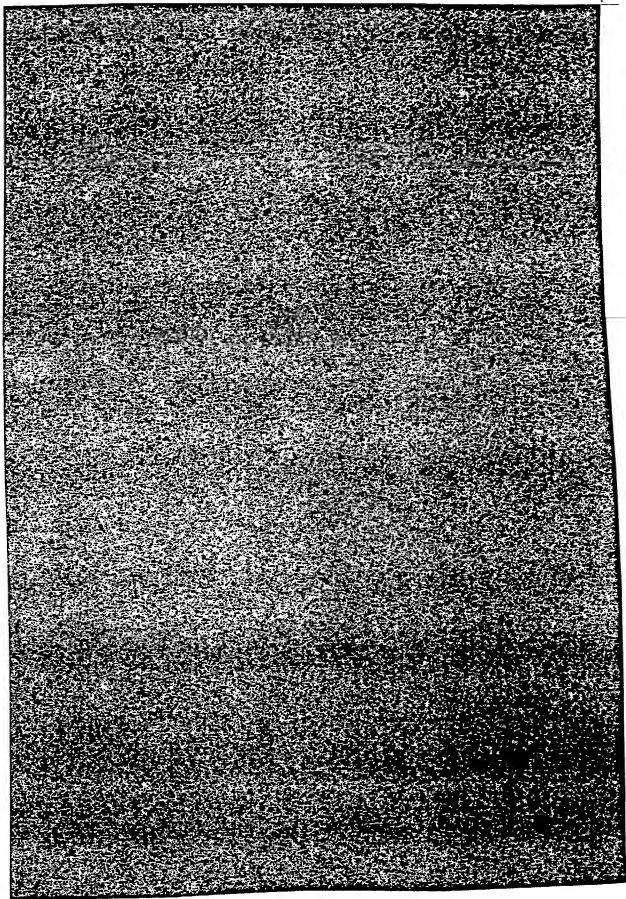
~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

27.



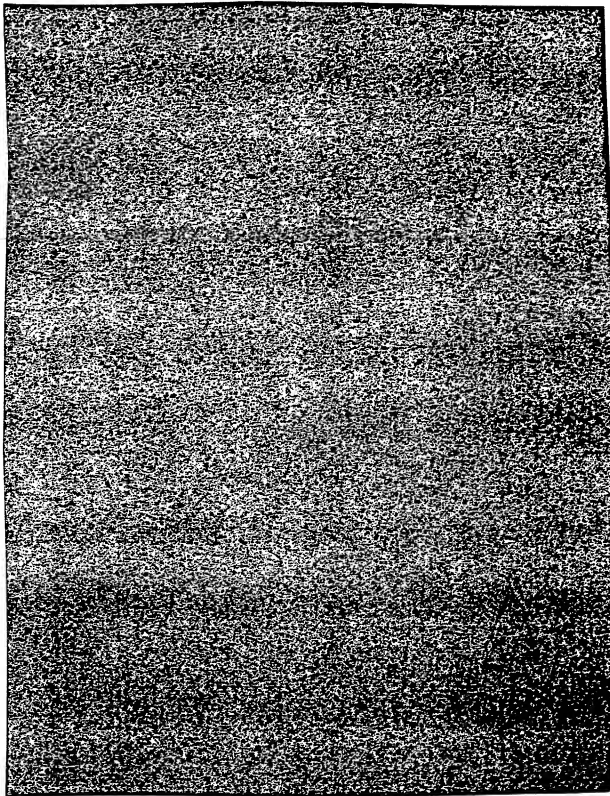
~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~



~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

29.

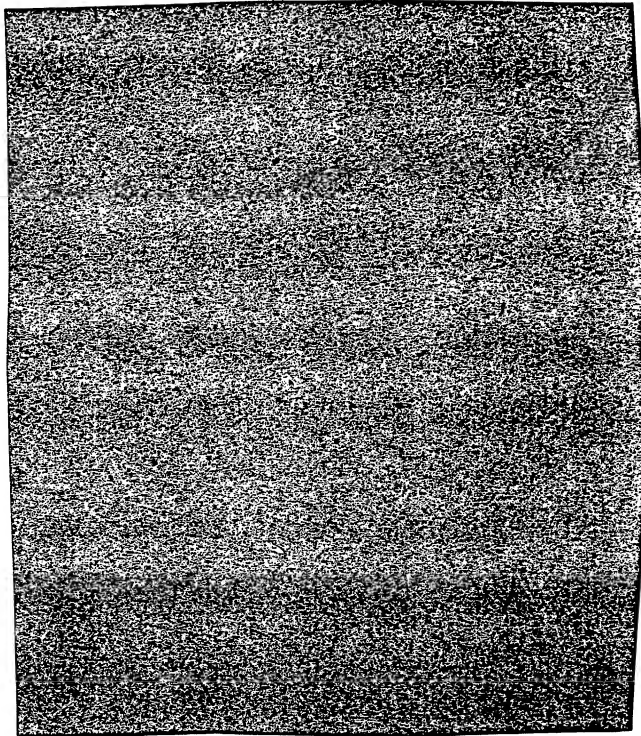


~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY



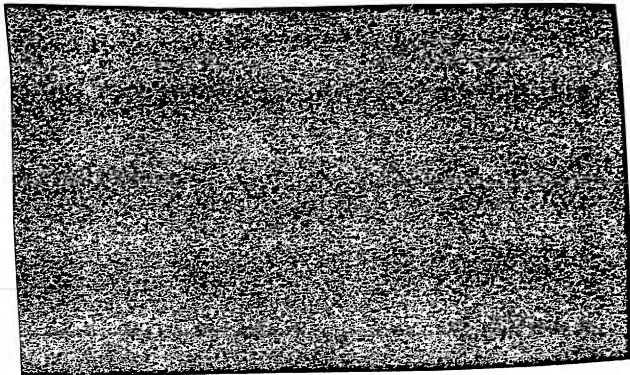
~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

30.



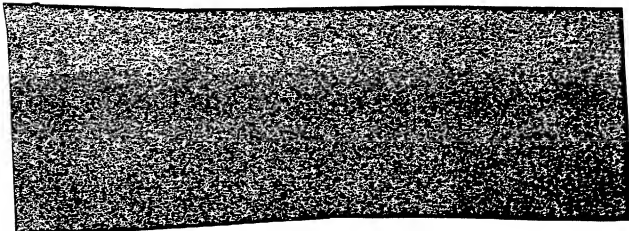
~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

31.



The weather again refused to cooperate from October 10-13.

It was checked daily  but forecasts were unfavorable. The mission authorized at the October 9 meeting



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

The First Days

By late afternoon on October 15, skilled analysts at

the



contained


unmistakable evidence of Soviet offensive missiles in Cuba.

Site construction appeared to be well under way for an installation near San Cristobal, about 100 miles west of Havana. The missiles were tentatively identified as being of at least 700 and possibly 1000 mile range. In the course of the evening this information was made available to high officials of the Departments of State and Defense, the intelligence community, and the White House. Among those who were informed, by telephone or word-of-mouth, were: Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara; Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell L. Gilpatric; General Joseph F. Carroll, Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency; General Maxwell D. Taylor, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Secretary of State Dean Rusk;

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~


33.


Under Secretary of State George W. Ball; Deputy Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson; Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Edwin M. Martin; State Department Director of Research and Intelligence Roger Hilsman; Director of Central Intelligence John A. McCone; his Deputy, General Marshall S. Carter, and White House Special Assistant McGeorge Bundy. Secretary Rusk took the call (from Hilsman) at a phone outside the formal dining room in the State Department, where he was host at a dinner for German Foreign Minister Schroeder. Assistant Secretary Martin was informed by telephone at the National Press Club, shortly after he finished an address to the Washington Chapter of Sigma Delta Chi on the Cuban situation. Several were informed at a private dinner at the Fort McNair quarters of General Taylor. Others were reached at their homes.

The photo interpreters continued to work through the evening, examining  and analyzing their

34.

findings. During the night they prepared a written report on what had been learned, for presentation to the President first thing the next morning.

Early the next morning there were meetings of intelligence officers and high policy officials at the Defense and State Departments. At 9 a.m., McGeorge Bundy presented the 

 evidence to the President in his bedroom. He straight-away ordered that a meeting be convened at the White House at 11:45. Those attending included most of the individuals who had been informed the previous evening with the addition of the Vice President, Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, and Presidential aide Theodore C. Sorenson. It was the first meeting of the group that came to be known as the Executive Committee of the National Security Council, or informally, Excomm.

General Carter, Deputy Director of the CIA, gave a


35.

detailed briefing on the basis of the [REDACTED] evidence, stating that the October 14 [REDACTED] showed the presence of a probably not yet operational mobile MRBM launch site in Cuba. He said that the evidence of the presence of offensive missiles on the island, while unmistakable, was fragmentary. It was not known how extensive a deployment had been made, or how near to operational the missiles might be. Accordingly, it was agreed that [REDACTED] should be greatly increased to obtain comprehensive coverage of Cuba as quickly as possible. All restrictions [REDACTED] were removed; the President ordered that [REDACTED] carried out on an unlimited basis. Some [REDACTED] mostly successful, [REDACTED]

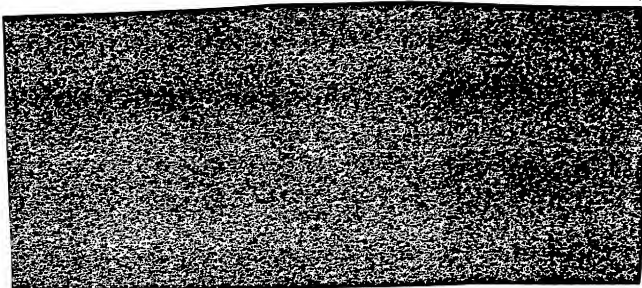
36.

That afternoon and thereafter every morning at 8:30 the United States Intelligence Board (USIB) met to draw together all intelligence strands. On the afternoon of the 16th it directed the Guided Missile and Astronautics Intelligence Committee (GMAIC) to prepare an immediate evaluation. The GMAIC evaluation concluded that the missiles were clearly under Soviet control and that there was no evidence that nuclear warheads were present in Cuba. It also noted that the missile installations that had been identified did not yet appear to be operational.

Already at this early moment the close relation between policy planning and intelligence information can be noted. Secretary Rusk and others have observed that both the timing of our response and the actions initiated were closely related to the intelligence indications of what was happening in Cuba.



37.



Meetings and conferences took place through the rest of the day in the intelligence community and the Departments of State and Defense. At State, a meeting took place in the afternoon with Ambassadors Bohlen and Thompson, both formerly ambassadors to the Soviet Union, and U.N. Ambassador Stevenson, in attendance. At 6:30 p.m. there was another meeting at the White House. A late meeting at the State Department concluded in the Secretary's office after 11 p.m.

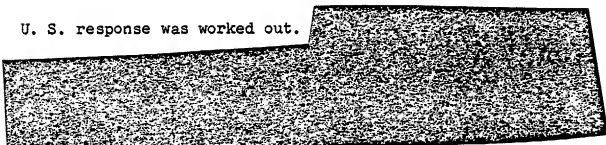
It was decided that very tight security should be maintained until the full implications of the presence of



~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

38-39.

Soviet missiles in Cuba had been plumbed, and until the  
U. S. response was worked out.



~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~

56

40.

Wednesday, October 17, was a "blur of meetings" for the main policy group, located mainly in Under Secretary Ball's Conference Room at the State Department. John McCone had returned from California by this time and took part in the discussions, as did Ambassador Thompson and Deputy Under Secretary of State U. Alexis Johnson. The President departed for Connecticut in the afternoon to keep a campaign commitment. In the morning he had a meeting with McCone and Bundy.

It was a day of "full and free discussion," according to one of the participants, with no rigid positions, no "departmental" points of view. The next meeting with the President would not take place until the next morning; additional information on the missiles was being gathered. This, therefore, was a day of thought and analysis, a day for the weighing of alternatives, for interpretation and conjecture. One of the first suggestions expressed was that the episode

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

56

41.

be treated like the 1960 U-2 incident -- as a mistake by the Kremlin in contradiction of Khrushchev's repeated promises that no offensive missiles would be placed in Cuba. The solution to the "mistake" was to erase it -- by an extremely limited air strike. Most of the group considered the missile deployment an effort to establish a major Soviet base, not primarily to support Castrol. An intelligence spokesman argued that the present build-up was probably only a first phase of a very large commitment of Soviet strength in Cuba. It was necessary to assume that nuclear warheads were at hand. near the three MRBM sites that had been spotted; in addition many ships were en route from the Soviet Union, and it must be assumed that they carried additional weapons. (GMAIC estimated that day that 16, and possibly 32, missiles of 1020 nautical mile range would be operational in about a week.) A significant bombing capability also

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

42.

existed: some ten IL 28's, still in crates, ten to twenty MIG 21's also in boxes; and 50-60 MIG 15/17/19's. It was considered probable that Soviet personnel retained full custody of all the weapons, including the SAM's. Another discussant stated the view that by his missile venture Khrushchev was preparing for a series of showdowns -- on Berlin, on overseas bases, on disarmament. Successful establishment of an offensive base on Cuba would give the Soviet leader the best chance of coming out ahead. The discovery of the missiles very shortly after their arrival in Cuba and before they were operational jumped the gun on Khrushchev. The advantage of surprise was, for the moment, with us. Several believed that Khrushchev would not be able to maintain his grip on power if he failed to respond strongly to any U.S. action. The least he would do, it was felt, would be to exert pressure on or move against the Jupiter missile

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

43.

installations in Turkey. The other most likely pressure point was Berlin.

Much discussion centered on the political vs. military approach. Under the political heading came suggestions that Castro, not Khrushchev should be held responsible, and that an emissary be sent to Castro demanding withdrawal of the missiles. It was asked why Castro should accept such a demand. There was recognition that a political approach to Castro or Khrushchev would inhibit military action, and that any political approach would be effective only if backed by the threat of military force. The rhetorical question was asked: why not relax about the missiles on Cuba -- just accept them as another target? The thought was also expressed that there was no intermediate position on the missiles: either they were tolerated, or they were not tolerated. No half-way measure appeared to be logically consistent.

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

44,

Preliminary discussions of an air strike centered on the number of sorties and bombs that would be required to knock out the Soviet weapons.

The

point was also made that offensive weapons were our sole target in Cuba.

Preliminary discussion of a blockade saw the advantage that this action would permit the crisis then to be put into a political context. On the other hand, it was argued that a

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

45.

blockade was the policy most likely to cause difficulties and divisions among the western allies.

Before the day closed there was also some discussion of calling Congress into session -- either to recognize a state of war, or to emphasize the difference between the action to be taken and war.

Thursday, October 18, was a day of activity on several fronts. The President had returned late the previous evening from his campaign trip to Connecticut. Additional [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] had been obtained and analyzed. An intelligence estimate put together jointly by the Joint Atomic Energy Intelligence Committee (JAEIC), [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] JAEIC stated that it was probable that MRBM's could be launched within 18 hours. (This was the first "Joint Evaluation" in a series issued daily

46.

until November 11.)

The Joint Chiefs of Staffs directed that

and ordered CINCPAC to transfer operational control of a reinforced infantry battalion to CINCLANT.

At 11 a.m. the main policy group met with the President at the White House. The opening discussion concentrated on clarifying the issues: the magnitude of the problem, the risks, the alternatives. What was the effect of the missiles on the overall balance of power? What was Khrushchev up to? Was it our objective to get rid of the missiles, or did it go farther? Did Khrushchev plan to present us with an ultimatum, and if he did, what would be the effect? What could Khrushchev do that would satisfy us? Was it Khrushchev's aim to make us give up our bases in Turkey, or to leave Berlin? The legalities of the situation entered the discussion. Cuba is not in the



~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

47.

Warsaw pact, it was pointed out, so measures initiated by

the United States would not <sup>bring into effect</sup> the terms of a formal

alliance/ between Cuba and the USSR. A blockade, it was suggested, partakes more of the

quality of legality than an air strike or invasion. It would

have the advantage of not killing any Russians, and would

permit the issue to be placed subsequently on a political

track. Firmness, it was agreed, was essential; time was an

important element. Whatever course was to be followed, the

more time there was to plan it in detail the better it was

likely to work. But each passing hour increased the chance

of a security leak and gave the Soviets additional time to

perfect their own plans and operations. It was decided to

split informally into two groups to evaluate two possible

courses: the "slow," involving political measures

and the "fast" -- notification, military action, then

blockade.

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

48.

The President listened, asked questions, probed replies -- and gave directions. One participant observed that at the close of a session the President issued orders firmly. They were his decisions and he expected them to be obeyed. One firm Presidential decision stated at the close of that meeting was that operational Soviet MRBM's in Cuba could not be accepted -- for both military and political reasons. This decision was the basis for further discussion among the main policy group -- without the President -- which continued that afternoon in the Secretary of State's Conference Room, By this time former Presidents Eisenhower and Truman had been apprised of the situation, and had made their views known to the President, who in turn communicated them to the planners.

The choices were beginning to narrow. Of the various options only one, the pure political track, could be implemented without notifying our allies. The non-military action

49.

of sending private letters to Castro and Khrushchev, with the option of then going to the UN was considered to be of doubtful value. One participant characterized the political approach as "going down with a whimper," and thought it better to risk a bang. On the other hand, a possible air strike raised serious questions. How could one be sure Castro and the Soviet missile commanders understood the message of notification, which would amount to an ultimatum? (The suggestion was made that the Swiss be asked to transmit it.) The danger to other countries was noted. It was not enough to knock out 16 missiles if in the course of doing so we lost three countries. Retaliation against the Guantanamo Naval Base was a possibility that could not be ignored.

There was discussion of the analogies between U.S. bases in Europe and the Soviet penetration into the Caribbean.

56

~~TOP SECRET~~  
EYES ONLY

50.

Some thought that Khrushchev would certainly try to make the removal of his missiles from Cuba a quid pro quo for our withdrawal from Europe. The possibility of a UN team being sent to all the world's missile installations was mentioned, as was the possibility of major negotiations with Khrushchev on all foreign bases. It was generally agreed that the basis of our presence in Europe is significantly different from the Soviet intrusion into this hemisphere. A basic principle of the balance of power in the nuclear age, it was stated, was that sensitive areas, such as Berlin, Iran, or Laos, should not be turned into missile bases, and that missile installations only be established pursuant to open military alliances, such as NATO. In any event, if a launch of nuclear missiles from Cuba should occur, it was recognized that retaliation would be made against the USSR.

The trend of thinking during the afternoon was towards

~~TOP SECRET~~  
EYES ONLY

51.

the course eventually followed:  notification

and a "legal" blockade, backed by the possibility of military action. This was the distillation of three days' thought and analysis. Essentially five main lines of action had been considered, separably<sup>ly</sup> and in various combinations. They were identified by one participant as:

1. Diplomatic pressure, but no military action, on the thesis that the weapons in Cuba did not change the overall military equation.
2. A limited surprise air strike against just the offensive missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads.
3. Blockade (this word, not "quarantine," was used up to the moment of the President's address).
4. A massive airstrike against the missile sites as well as bombers, SAM's, and everything else in Cuba of an offensive nature.

~~TOP SECRET~~

56

52.

EYES ONLY

5. Invasion.

In the early stages of discussion this was considered to be an ascending order of magnitude, with the blockade considered more extreme action than a limited air strike. Vice President Johnson had termed a blockade an "act of war" in a speech as recently as October 6. Stopping, seizing, and searching a Russian ship on the high seas might have grave consequences. On the other hand, a limited air strike precisely targetted on the missiles could perhaps be pulled off without a major power confrontation. Possibly it could be treated as the 1960 U-2 episode should have been -- in effect to pretend it hadn't happened. We would assume the missiles were in Cuba "by mistake;" wiping them out with a few non-nuclear bombs would correct the mistake. That would be the end of the affair, on the assumption that the Soviets would not choose to make an issue out of/ <sup>being</sup> caught

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

The Document in this folder is numbered 5b.

53.

red-handed in an embarrassing situation. On the basis of the

[REDACTED] it was thought that an air strike of a few minutes duration could destroy all the offensive missiles in Cuba, with little damage to surrounding areas and negligible loss of life. Most of the group favored this course of action in the first hours of discussion.

The read-out [REDACTED] taken Wednesday, which was available Thursday, showed that there were more missiles and sites than was thought at first. [REDACTED] indicated that none of the missiles were actually operational. Nor did they provide hard evidence of the presence of any nuclear nosecones. This more detailed intelligence made it plain that an air strike to destroy all the offensive missiles would be a major effort, not an affair of a few bombs and a few minutes. Both the diplomatic and military implications of such an operation loomed large. Human beings,



~~TOP SECRET~~


~~EYES ONLY~~

56

54.

both Russians and Cubans, would undoubtedly be killed. U.S. responsibility for the bombing could not possibly be concealed or evaded to any significant extent. Retaliation by the Soviets, or conceivably even the Castro regime, could take unpredictable and catastrophic forms.

The Meeting With Gromyko

Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko was scheduled to see the President Thursday evening. The meeting was a remarkable confrontation, both for what was said and for what was left unsaid. The President conferred with Secretary Rusk and Ambassador Thompson shortly before Gromyko's arrival. The possibility of handling the Cuban Missile situation by diplomacy alone had been discarded by this time. Although the  evidence was detailed and irrefutable, it was decided not to present it to the Foreign Minister or in any other way to tip our hand.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

55.

Gromyko was ushered in to the President's office at 5:00 p.m. Rusk and Thompson remained in the room. The interpreter was Alexander Akalovsky of the State Department. The Soviet diplomat opened the conversation with some routine phrases on the desirability of working for the elimination of differences between the two great countries. He remarked that it was unfortunate there had been no progress on Berlin and expressed the "sincere hope" of his country for a settlement of the German question. The President interjected that the Soviet proposal on Berlin contained nothing new and provided no guarantee of security for the city.

Gromyko mentioned that Khrushchev planned to come to New York to attend the U.N. General Assembly late in November -- after the American elections, and that Khrushchev thought a meeting between himself and President Kennedy at that time would be useful. The President said he'd be glad to

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

56

56.

see Khrushchev if he came to the United States.

Gromyko then turned the subject to Cuba. He charged that the United States was "pestering" a small country, interfering in its internal affairs. Cuba is not a threat, he said; it is a baby compared to the giant U.S. As for Soviet assistance, Gromyko said he was instructed to make clear that such aid was solely for the purpose of contributing to the defensive capability of Cuba. The training of Cubans by Soviet specialists was by no means offensive; it was training in the use of defensive weapons. If it were otherwise the Soviet Union would never have become involved in rendering such assistance. The basic principle of Soviet foreign policy, he reiterated, was to alleviate tensions, eliminate outstanding problems, and resolve them peacefully.

The President replied that there was no threat of a U.S. invasion of Cuba, and that he would have been glad to give

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

57.

assurances to that effect had Khrushchev asked. But since July the Soviet Union had been shipping arms to Cuba, which was an extremely serious matter as a result of which a most unfortunate situation was developing, perhaps the most dangerous since the end of World War II. It was having a profound impact on the American people and the Congress. Gromyko mentioned the April, 1961, Bay of Pigs invasion attempt. The President cut in that he'd already told Khrushchev that was a mistake, and the he would have given assurances that there would be no further invasion attempt. But since July when the arms shipments had started the situation had changed. Gromyko reiterated that the Soviet specialists in Cuba were giving training in handling certain kinds of defensive arms -- and he wished to stress the word defensive. The President then read a portion of his September 4 Press Conference statement warning that the U.S. would not tolerate

58.

turning Cuba into a base for offensive weapons.

The conversation turned to an extended discussion of the nuclear test ban issue, then broadened to cover the prospects for coexistence of the two ideologies. The President agreed that theirs were two great countries with respect for peace -- so it was all the more inexplicable that the Soviets should be sending arms to Cuba.

The meeting lasted more than two and a quarter hours. Gromyko left the White House at 7:18 p.m. At 8:00 p.m. he was the guest of honor at a dinner hosted by Rusk in the 8th Floor dining room at the State Department. Dinner was followed by a long, detailed, and technical exchange on Berlin, which turned into an acrimonious but general discussion of which side was responsible for the tensions of the cold war. Not a single word was said about Cuba. Gromyko did not depart for the Soviet Embassy until 12:25 a.m. Rusk

59.

returned to his office at that hour for a brief discussion with Thompson, Ball, and Johnson, at which they brought him up to date on the policy group thinking during the evening.

The President had asked former Secretary of Defense Robert A. Lovett to see him; he did so shortly after Gromyko left the White House. Meanwhile discussion continued in the Under Secretary's Conference Room at State (nick-named the "think tank" by some of the discussants). The main subject was how a blockade would operate and what its consequences might be. For awhile George Ball met separately with Martin, Johnson, Ambassador Thompson, and the Acting Legal Advisor of the State Department, Leonard C. Meeker, who had been asked by Secretary Rusk earlier in the day to prepare a legal analysis of a blockade of Cuba under the circumstances. At this meeting, which concerned legal and O.A.S. questions, Meeker suggested the use of the term "defensive quarantine"

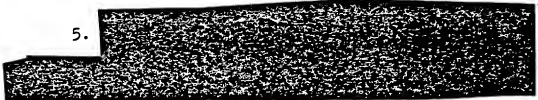
60.

instead of blockade.

At 10:00 p.m. the President called the policy group to the White House. At this meeting the final consensus began to develop. The Soviet Union was to be held accountable for the missiles; Cuba was seen as a pawn, a useful piece of geography for the Soviets. It was recognized that the U.S. must act, but that we have "too much self-respect to respond by an act of aggression," as one participant put it. There was risk in any course, but it was deemed better to take the risks of action than inaction. A blockade won wide approval on the ground that it permitted better control of events and the exercise of subsequent options. The President made a tentative decision to impose a blockade and to announce it Monday night. He directed that detailed planning be started to carry out this decision. Tasks were assigned to various individuals.

61.

At the Pentagon before the close of the day Deputy  
Defense Secretary Gilpatric requested / <sup>the</sup> Joint Chiefs:

1. to have a list prepared of riot control equipment and other support which the U.S. could give Latin American nations for internal security purposes;
2. to determine which Latin American nations could assist the U.S. in a blockade of Cuba;
3. to prepare a list of offensive weapons to include in a blockade;
4. to consider <sup>the</sup> / pro's and con's of blockading aircraft as well as ships; and
5. 

The Continental Air Defense Command was instructed to increase available aircraft at bases in Florida by shifting fourteen F-102 jet fighters from Seymour Johnston Air Force Base to



62.

Homestead Air Force Base bringing the total there to 18, six F-106's from Langley Air Force Base to Patrick Air Force Base (bringing the total there to 12), six RC-121 early warning and control aircraft with specialized aerial radar and surveillance equipment to McCoy Air Force Base where there were already six others of this type, and to retain a detachment of ten naval all-weather fighters, F4D's, at the Key West Naval Air Station. Tyndall Air Force Base in Florida was also alerted for possible use as augmentation forces.

The President was scheduled to leave on a campaign swing on the 19th, and to avoid arousing suspicions he did not cancel out. All members of the Excomm agreed he should go, recognizing that if and when additional intelligence<sup>9</sup> was available, and when the staff work and detailed recommendations were in better shape, he could be called back to Washington at short notice. He met with Secretaries Rusk and McNamara before leaving, delaying his departure by half an hour.

63.

Meetings of the planning group of principals were held through much of the day, beginning at 11:00 a.m. in the Under Secretary's Conference Room. A detailed "Joint Evaluation" by GMAIC and JAEIC was presented to the group. It concluded that there was a Soviet MRBM regiment at San Cristobal and one at Sagua la Grande, and an IRBM regiment at Guanajay; and that the Soviets intended to develop Cuba into a prime strategic base. A report was made on the meetings with Gromyko the previous evening. Then some of the political and legal aspects of a blockade were discussed. The importance of keeping a blockade legal was emphasized. A declaration of war was held to be not necessary or desirable. The basis of the blockade was self defense; its legality would be secure if it received the approval of the Organization of American States, where the votes of at least 14 countries would be needed, and was not disapproved by the Security Council. (Information on these matters was provided by Leonard Meeker and

64.

Nicholas de B. Katzenbach, Deputy Attorney General, who sat in on the meetings.)

The discussion then veered back to the possibility of an air strike. Former Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson argued that a mere quarantine meant little, that the security of the country should not be risked for the sake of legal formalities. Any who wanted to would understand the necessity for whatever action was required to eliminate the missiles. Although the President had made a tentative decision the previous evening to follow the blockade track and to announce it Monday, and had assigned planning responsibilities accordingly, the air strike possibility occupied the group for some time.

Both courses of action, blockade or air strike were made on both practical and moral grounds. It was pointed out that in the light of the additional intelligence on the numbers of missiles in Cuba an air strike would have to be quite large to be effective. Concern was expressed that time was passing, and

65.

that the tentative decision made the previous evening was coming unstuck. In the end the blockade approach commanded the broadest support in part because it was the first step which permitted the widest range of future steps, including the possibility of a subsequent air strike. But it was decided to keep both alternatives under active consideration by having detailed staff work done on them so as not to limit the President's range of choice the next day.

It is not wholly clear how long there remained a possibility that the course of action to be followed might be different from that actually selected. By Friday, it was apparent to most of the insiders that a "rolling consensus" was moving towards the notification - defensive quarantine track. But the final decision was not at that stage a foregone conclusion. For one thing, there remained the chance that new intelligence information would sharply alter previous calculations. A security leak or a sudden, unexpected move by the Soviets might also occur.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

66.

Aside from these possible changes in the circumstances, some members of the Excomm considered that there was a hedge on the decision against an air strike until Sunday morning.

The purpose and modalities of the blockade were examined in the Excomm during the afternoon. Was the objective to achieve removal of the missiles? Clearly, that was our goal, sooner or later. Some thought that the blockade would not in itself achieve the removal, and that other steps would have to be taken to get them out. The blockade would of course prevent the arrival of additional missiles. If the nuclear components were not yet physically present in Cuba, the blockade would help keep them out -- though they could be flown in by air transport. The conviction was expressed that the blockade should continue until the missiles were out. There was discussion of the effect of a blockade on the Western alliance. The possibility of strain was noted, but it was felt the alliance would hold, and that the most serious difficulties might arise over any attempts by the

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

67.

Soviets to put pressure on Berlin.

During the day a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) was prepared by USIB. It dealt with probable Soviet reactions to three possible courses of U.S. action: (a) do nothing about the offensive missiles; (b) total or limited blockade under a declaration of war against Cuba; and (c) military action to destroy the missile installations and invade Cuba. The Estimate concluded:

- The Soviets would continue the missile build-up if we did nothing; they were seeking more than a token capability.
- A diplomatic approach would not halt the build-up; instead the Soviets would attempt to link the missiles with U.S. foreign bases, Cuba with Berlin, and suggest negotiations.
- Direct military action against the missiles would put pressure on the Soviets to respond in unpredictable ways.

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~

68.

- Military action against Cuba might give the Soviets a pretext for treating it as an affair which does not concern them, thereby avoid risks of strong response.
- The Soviets would consider retaliation elsewhere, especially Berlin.
- The Soviets probably would not take steps which run a risk of general war.

The intelligence estimates were seen by most of the main policy planners and the President shortly after they were completed, on the same day. Some of the group did not see them as promptly, and they were usually discussed as the first item of business at the next Excomm meeting, which might not take place until the next morning.

Liaison within the intelligence community had been strengthened by this time by placing officers from the State Department and other agencies on the Watch Committee of the National Indications Center at the Pentagon. The State Department's Bureau

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

69.

of Intelligence and Research was also represented on GMAIC.

During the week-end William Bundy, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs prepared an analysis of U.S. overseas bases with particular reference to the Jupiters in Turkey and Italy. The memorandum pointed out that these installations were rapidly approaching obsolescence, that they were an unhardened "first strike" type weapon, and that plans were already in train to replace them with missile-bearing submarines patrolling the Mediterranean. Many of our air and naval bases in other parts of the world were of substantially greater utility; losing them would incur a higher security cost than removing the Jupiters. From a purely military point of view, some bases could be abandoned without serious consequences to the national defense, the memorandum stated.

Secretary Rusk cancelled a trip scheduled for Friday evening to Hot Springs, Virginia, where he was to address the Business Council. The Director of the Arms Control and Disarmament

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

70.

Agency, William C. Foster, delivered his speech for him. It read in part: "We hope that neither Moscow or Peiping will make the terrible mistake of underestimating President Kennedy's resolve to defend the vital interests of the Free World."

Our ambassadors to Latin American countries who were in the U.S. were ordered to return to their posts that evening. There were two exceptions to this order. Ambassador to Mexico Thomas Mann did not depart for his post until Saturday night. Until then he was held in readiness as a possible envoy for a face-to-face talk with Castro in Havana. He did not arrive in Mexico City until Sunday Morning. In addition Ambassador Bell did not go to Peru; our embassy in Lima was headed by the Chargé throughout the crisis.

During the night at the State and Defense Departments both lines of action -- blockade and large air strike -- were "war gamed." A complete scenario for each was worked out, covering a wide range of contingencies and Soviet responses. In all the planning it was recognized that the Soviets were at a tactical

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

56

71.

disadvantage in Cuba and would be likely to take countermeasures elsewhere. Cuba was a long ways from the Soviet Union. The United States could dominate the air and sea over and around the island should non-nuclear combat take place. There were obvious advantages to the Soviets in retaliating elsewhere, such as Berlin or the Jupiter sites in Turkey or Italy. They could attack by air, invade, or blockade these critical spots which were located closer to their homeland. The President had asked Ambassador Thompson to write a paper on how the Soviet government viewed the situation and what their likely responses to various proposed courses of action might be. He worked on it until late that night.

During the afternoon Friday the Atlantic and Carribean commands had been alerted against possible air attack on Panama Canal, Ramey Air Force Base and Naval Station, Roosevelt Roads, and were requested to prepare recommendations to strengthen air defenses. Hawk Battalions were directed to increase their

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

71a.

readiness condition. [REDACTED] of Cuba continued.

The fall mobility exercise of the Tactical Air Command was cancelled. In answer to a query on a story in the Northern Virginia Sun the following statement was released:

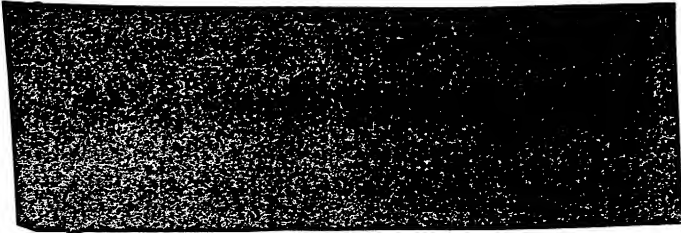
"A Pentagon spokesman denied tonight that any alert has been ordered or that any emergency measures have been set in motion against Communist-ruled Cuba. Further, the spokesman said, the Pentagon has no information indicating the presence of offensive weapons in Cuba."

Late that night the first draft of the President's October 22 speech was written by Ted Sorenson. From Chicago the President kept in touch with the Excomm by telephone.



At 8:12 a.m. Saturday, October 20, the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised the military commanders-in-chief that a state of tension with regard to Cuba could lead to military action. The Joint Evaluation that day stated [REDACTED]

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

71b.



At 9:35 a.m. (Central Daylight Time) at the Sheraton Blackstone Hotel in Chicago Pierre Salinger announced that the President was cancelling the remainder of his campaign trip and would fly back to Washington. During the morning the planning group met in the Secretary of State's Conference Room. A detailed scenario had been prepared by U. Alexis Johnson charting the expected course of action. It was discussed and evaluated.



Messages, letters, draft telegrams of instruction, and contingency papers were prepared at the State Department. The Chief legal officers of the Departments of State, Defense, and Justice drafted the quarantine proclamation.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

56

72.

Meanwhile,<sup>a</sup> series of ship, air, and troop movements were going on around the country. Most of these were in connection with the major amphibious exercise in the Southeast U.S. and Caribbean named "PHIBRIGLEX 62," scheduled for the period October 15-30. The timing of this exercise was fortunate; it provided an almost ideal "cover" for military preparations related to the Cuban crisis. Many actions that would have been ordered by the Joint Chiefs had already been set in motion by "PHIBRIGLEX 62." For example, more than forty ships involved in the exercise got underway October 15. At scattered ports thousands of marines were loaded on ships heading towards the Caribbean area, (see Footnote). Naval personnel were put on alert status. Press inquiries about these and other activities

Footnote: In his annual "State of the Corps" message delivered January 3, 1963, Marine Corps Commandant David M. Shoup said that "one of the greatest assault teams in American history" was assembled for a possible invasion of Cuba. He added:

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

73.

were answered with references to PHIBRIGLEX 62. The answers were not strictly speaking incorrect until 11:07 am on Saturday, when CINCLANT was directed to suspend PHIBRIGLEX 62.

The President flew to Andrews Air Force Base from Chicago, then took a helicopter to the South Lawn of the White House, landing at 1:37 pm. At 2:30 he met with the planning group ✓ of principals in the Oval Room. The full group was there, including Ambassadors Stevenson and Thompson and Robert Lovett. The meeting opened with a detailed intelligence briefing

The missiles in Cuba were described as

Footnote (continued): Tucked away in scores of ships . . . were thousands of marines, with their aircraft and ground weapons ready--teamed up with the Navy in this getting ashore and staying ashore business. . . .The 45,000 marines awaiting their Government's decision on invasion, and the 100,000 more ready to back them up, knew all the answers. I saw it in their eyes. . . ."

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

74.

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

mobile, fast to set up; it was estimated that it could take as little as 18 hours to make them operational. The discussion then turned to the alternative courses of action. Only two tracks were seen as feasible: an air strike at the missiles preceded by notification, or the blockade. An airstrike would have to be big, it was pointed out, and would almost certainly have to be accompanied by an invasion. The government of Cuba would be in chaos. It was hardly conceivable that the Soviets would not respond militarily. The President commented that the air strike plan as presented was "not surgical," but was "apt to grab" and require a massive commitment of U.S. strength. He directed that attention be concentrated on the track of action whose main feature was the defensive quarantine enforced by the U.S. Navy. This he said was the only course of action compatible with our principles. There was only a small risk that this action would "pull the lanyard;"

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

75.

at the same time it was a substantial initiative which permitted the subsequent exercise of other options. The question of extending the quarantine to airplanes flying to Cuba was raised. It was recommended that they be shot down if there was good reason to think they carried nuclear warheads. The President said that there would be no bargains over our bases in Turkey and Italy. He also noted that the thrust of our response would be directed at the offensive missiles, that the bombers in Cuba were less of a problem. The objective of the blockade was to achieve the removal of the missiles. A distinction would be made between the missile threat and the Castro problem. If after several days there was a continuation of missile site construction an airstrike might be necessary against a minimum number of targets to eliminate the main nuclear threat. It was held unlikely that the Soviets would retaliate, especially since the Strategic Air Command would be in a full alert condition. If surviving Cuban missiles

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~



76.


after an airstrike were used against the U.S., it might be necessary to invade Cuba, but not to use nuclear weapons against Cuba. However it might be necessary to make a compensatory attack against the USSR.

No course, it was recognized, was without risks. An airstrike might not be 100 per cent effective, and could provoke retaliation. No matter what track was chosen, the Soviets might retaliate in Berlin or elsewhere. But if the missiles were left in Cuba, both Khrushchev and Castro would be able to do what they pleased. Castro, it was pointed out, could shoot 100 Americans a day with impunity. After weighing all the pro's and con's, the President directed that a defensive quarantine be instituted as quickly as possible, taking into account the need to notify allies and to make the necessary military preparations. Prior approval of the OAS was to be secured if possible. We would also take the initiative in the U.N. Security Council. The "scenario" for the full

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

operation -- covering diplomatic steps, ship movements, public statements, etc. -- was reviewed and approved. The President's television address was set for Monday at 7:00 pm, designated "P Hour," with the possibility of acting sooner if a security breach occurred. The draft of the President's speech was discussed and revised. The importance of providing our allies clear, visual proof of the missiles' existence



was stressed. It was decided

to send key intelligence officers abroad to assist U.S. ambassadors in briefings, and to send Dean Acheson to brief the principal NATO allies.

That night the State Department sent "pre-position" messages to all Latin American posts, subject to a "go" signal Monday (or possibly Sunday) indicating the course of action to be followed. At the Defense Department the Navy and the other services went forward with preparations to carry out the defensive quarantine.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

78.

During the day the U.S. Information Agency took steps to link up American medium wave stations with the Voice of America to broadcast the President's speech, and to go on 24-hours-a-day transmission in Spanish. In the early evening the President called the British Ambassador, Sir David Ormsby-Gore to the White House and talked to him privately for a short time. Late that night the President spoke with Prime Minister Macmillan by trans-atlantic telephone.

Sunday, October 21: Transition from Planning to Action

Up to Sunday morning there remained a possibility that our opening move would be a limited air strike at the missiles, as had been advocated by some members of the Excomm. At 10:00 a.m. the President met with Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, and after a brief discussion gave final approval, both as to substance and timing, to the plan that was to be followed.

This decision did not foreclose further discussion and suggestions. Revisions in the scenario were proposed, and in

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

79.

some cases accepted, right up to the moment of the President's speech, and afterwards too, on points of timing and detail as well as policy. The Navy sought clarification of policy for dealing with various contingencies that might arise in connection with the blockade. The coordination of military and diplomatic moves was kept under careful view. In a few instances, ambassadors had suggestions concerning approaches to the governments to which they were accredited.

There was also a proposal that the thrust of the President's speech be altered to pin responsibility for the missiles on Castro as well as the Soviets. This would have the advantage of laying the groundwork for dealing with Castro after the missiles were out and, depending on events, demanding Castro's removal as part of our price. In the language of the Excomm, it increased our range of options. The determination of the United States to compel withdrawal of the missiles, by use of force if necessary, would be made clear in any case.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

79a.

Spreading the blame more widely might also have the incidental benefit of giving the Soviets a face-saving route out. If the initial challenge to Castro and the Kremlin did not achieve the desired results, the full thrust of the U.S. demand could be escalated and concentrated on the Soviet Union. The disadvantage of this proposal was that to be effective, the blockade would have to cover additional items other than arms in order to put pressure on the Cubans as well. While this view received serious attention, it did not make its way into the President's speech, principally because of the difficulties posed by starting the blockade at a higher point on the scale.

All day the Departments of State and Defense, normally somnolent on a Sunday, hummed with activity -- entirely behind a tightly-maintained security curtain. Staff personnel were summoned to both Departments by telephone calls Saturday evening and Sunday morning. Once the policy had been determined the chief task was to see that it was carried out

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

79b.

with maximum effectiveness, with due attention given to every facet. At the Defense Department the Office of the Joint Chiefs, the War Room, the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Office of the Secretary were focal points. Work at the State Department involved the Operations Center -- which was tied directly to the War Room and the White House Situation Room; the Secretariat, several regional Bureaus, the International Organization Bureau, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and the Legal Advisor's office.

During the day Livingston Merchant arrived to prepare for his mission to Ottawa where he was to brief Prime Minister Diefenbaker. (A telephone search for Merchant the previous afternoon had located him at a Princeton football game.) Dean Acheson was briefed for his mission to Europe, and Ambassador Dowling (to Germany) was called back from Georgia where he had been visiting his mother who was ill. Work on drafts of resolutions for the OAS Council and the Security Council was

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

79c.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

underway. Robert Manning (State), Arthur Sylvester (Defense), and Pierre Salinger (White House) met at Salinger's home to establish public affairs coordination.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

80.

At 11 a.m. a number of the planners met in Bundy's office to discuss questions relating to the OAS, the "period of grace" prior to institution of the quarantine, the press and public information, and communications to Europe. State Department Chairman of Policy Planning Walt W. Rostow was designated to head a forward planning group instructed to "think ahead."

During the day the Board of National Estimates stated that the Soviets would be cautious in the face of U.S. determination, but would probably continue the build-up if the U.S. position was ambiguous. It also concluded that the Soviets would not make major military retaliation if the U.S. sank a Soviet ship while enforcing the blockade. The Joint Evaluation that day concluded that there would be at least five Soviet offensive missile regiments in Cuba with a salvo potential of about one-half the current intercontinental ballistic missile threat from the Soviet Union.

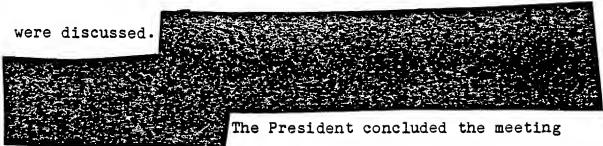
~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

81.

At 2:30 p.m. the President convened a formal meeting of the National Security Council. Admiral George Anderson, Chief of Naval Operations, and Don Wilson, Acting Director, USIA, attended. Discussion centered on the third draft of the President's speech and progress reports on preparations. Scenarios of action were approved. Admiral Anderson raised questions on how the first intercept should be made. The President stated that our first objective was to block further shipments of offensive military equipment to Cuba, and that our aim was also to see that the Soviet missiles were removed from Cuba under UN supervision and inspection. Problems of time were discussed.



The President concluded the meeting by observing that we might be subjected to threats, but that the biggest danger lay in taking no action.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~

82.

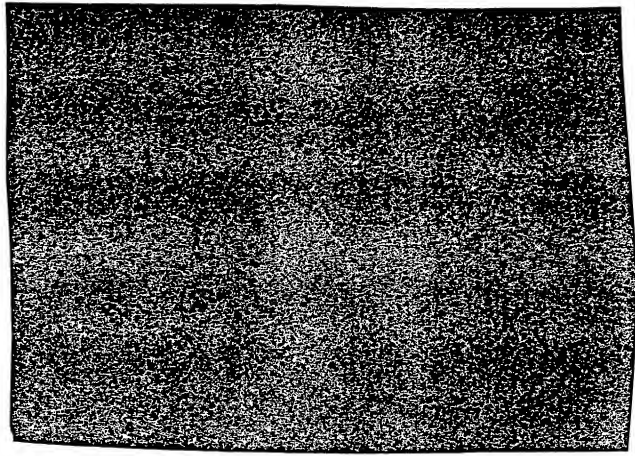
During the day White House aide Larry O'Brien prepared a list of Congressional leaders and with General Godfrey McHugh arranged for military jets to bring them to Washington for a 5:00 p.m. Monday meeting at the White House. That night the State Department sent top secret telegrams in code describing the proposed actions to our Ambassadors. The text of the President's speech with a covering letter to Khrushchev was sent to our Embassy in Moscow for delivery to the Soviet Foreign Office one hour before the President's speech. Letters from the President to Macmillan, de Gaulle, Adenauer, Nehru, Diefenbaker, Fanfani, Mayor Brandt and others were sent in code to our Embassies for transmission. The text of the President's speech was sent in code to all posts. Individual letters from the President were sent to 43 Heads of Government. During that week-end the State Department transmitted 15 separate Presidential letters or

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

83.

other documents to a total of 441 recipients.



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

83a.

~~SECRET EYES ONLY~~

Meanwhile Washington's press corps seethed with curiosity, not all of it ill-informed or idle. Very late Saturday night James Reston, chief of the Washington bureau of the New York Times telephoned George Ball and McGeorge Bundy at home and asked them what was going on. He was given a partial briefing with a request that in the interests of national security the story not be printed. On Sunday the President called Orville Dryfoos, President of the Times and enlisted his cooperation. A story did appear in the Sunday morning Washington Post speculating on the late-hour comings and goings at the White House, Pentagon, and State Department, and suggesting that the most likely focus of the activity was Cuba, though the presence of Martin J. Hillenbrand, head of the Berlin Task Force, at one White House meeting prompted the reporter to write that it might also involve Berlin. Starting late Saturday night and continuing through Sunday Lincoln White, the State Department spokesman, logged some 60 telephone calls at home. Other senior

~~SECRET EYES ONLY~~

84.

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~Monday, October 22: The Crisis Goes Public

By Monday morning a vast complex of national security machinery within the U.S. government was in motion. At 9:00 a.m. the "go" signal was sent "in the clear" (that is, not in cipher) to all the posts with action responsibilities, which included most NATO and Latin American capitals. By then, ships were moving, troops were being readied, diplomatic preparations were in train, public affairs staffs were gearing up for action, steps to inform and consult with key members of Congress were being taken, speeches were being polished, resolutions sharpened, and preparations for the use of the security mechanisms of the United Nations and the Organization of American States were well under way. All these activities were in line with the basic "scenario" setting forth the anticipated track of U.S. policy hour by hour and minute by minute for the next two days. The scenario was subject to constant revision on points of detail and timing; it went through a large number of drafts up to (and after) the

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

85.

President's speech in the light of the unfolding situation.

One of the final versions is attached, <sup>as pages 86, 86a, 87 & 87a.</sup> But the main thrust

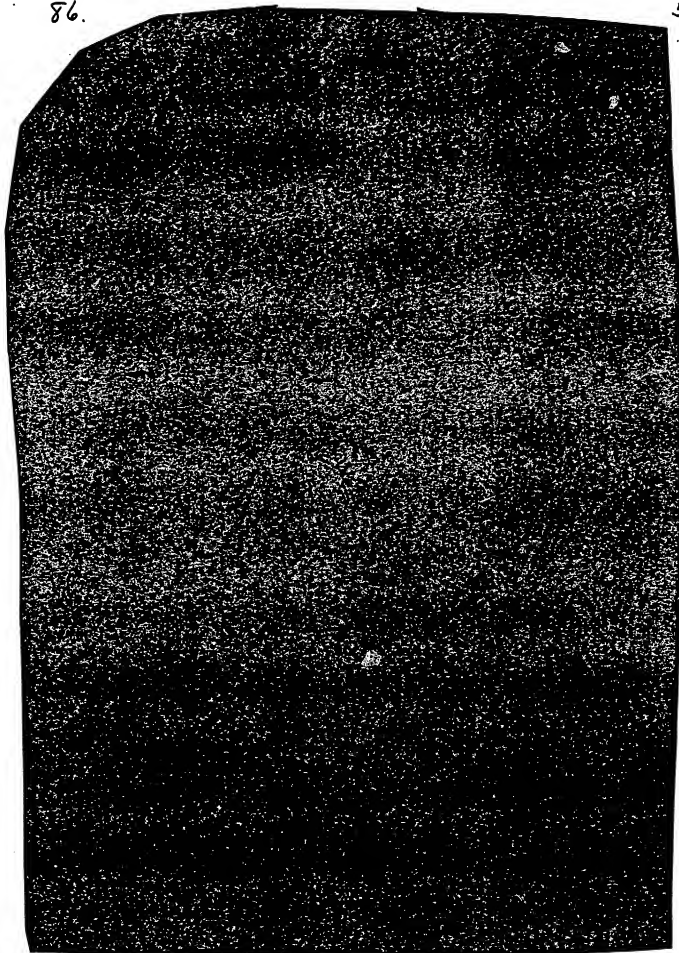
of U.S. policy was set, and the hundreds of pieces of

action going on in Washington and around the globe that day

were designed to give it effect.

/

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

83b.

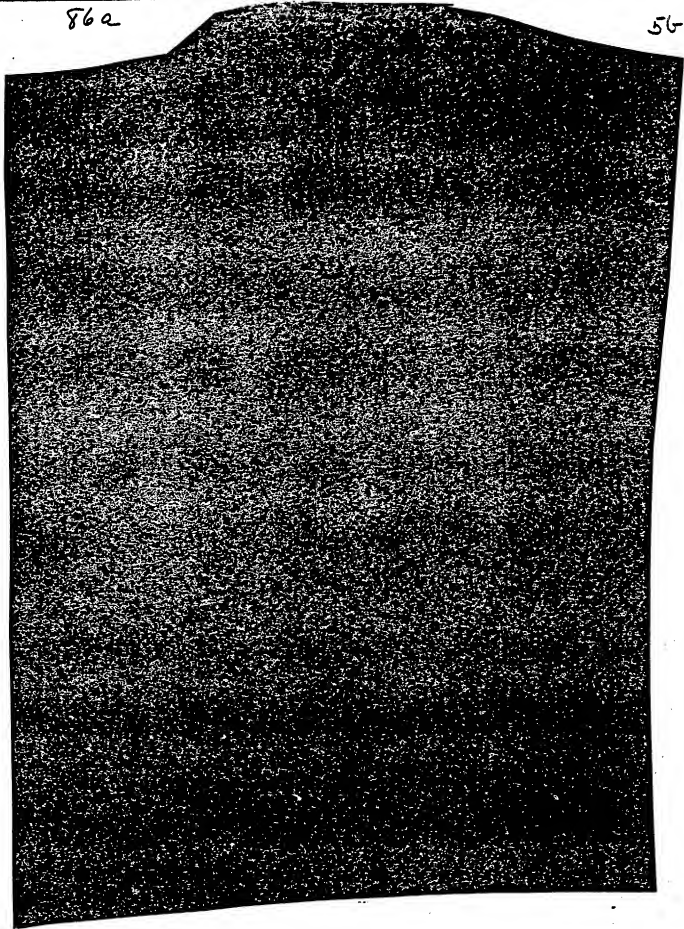
personnel of the news office and public affairs bureaus at State and Defense also were besieged with queries. "Link" White fielded all his with the response: "I don't know enough to give you any guidance whatsoever." With the exception of the Post story, no newspaper accounts of the crisis appeared until Monday, and none were 'hard' until after the President's speech.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~



86a

56





87a

56

  
 TOP SECRET

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

56

88.

In the morning the Atlantic Fleet was given its orders in the form of a planning directive for the quarantine of Cuba. Evacuation of dependents from Guantanamo started at noon. At 12:37 p.m. the Tactical Air Command was instructed to put into effect a partial airborne alert and to execute a pre-arranged force dispersal plan. Shortly after two in the afternoon orders were sent to load the 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade attached to CINCPAC and to transfer its operational control to CINCLANT.

During the morning our embassies in London and Ottawa were told to ask the British and Canadian governments to suspend temporarily all transit facilities and overflight clearances for bloc aircraft destined to Cuba. At 10:55 Washington time a special "go" signal was sent to all Latin

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

56

89.

American posts and our embassy in Manila. At about the same time all U.S. posts in the world were instructed to take precautions against communist or other hostile demonstrations.

A short Excomm meeting took place at 11:30 in the Cabinet Room. The President said that it was important to think about procedure as much as policy. He said that personal messages should be sent to the commanders of our Jupiter installations in Italy and Turkey asking them to take special precautions. There was discussion of possible problems arising out of the lack of notification of the NATO allies. The reason for the omission, it was agreed, was the obvious one of lack of time. Fairly substantial explanations would have to be made, it was recognized, to all the NATO allies. The briefings planned for that evening at the

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

90.


State Department would be useful, and the missions of Dean Acheson, Livingston Merchant, and Walter Dowling were also viewed as key elements. While it was important to get the allies to see the issue as we saw it, the U.S. was determined to act and would do so. The correct course of action, properly executed, would probably bolster the Alliance while, it was hoped, impressing the Soviets with the strength of our determination.

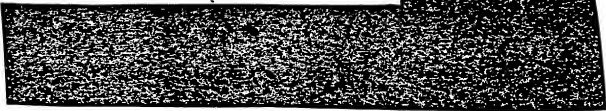
Much of the activity Monday within the intelligence community concerned the question of how much information could be released <sup>the</sup> in/briefings of ambassadors and the press scheduled for that evening. On the one hand, it was essential that enough data be released to make plain the extent and character of the Soviet build-up in Cuba to audiences some of whom at least might be disposed not to take the United States' word for it. On the other hand, we did not want to divulge the full extent of our


~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

91.

intelligence gathering capabilities by revealing all the knowledge thereby obtained. In particular, those in charge of the photographic reconnaissance and interpretation activities were extremely hesitant about releasing 



The USIB meeting that morning, several meetings at the State and Defense Departments and the CIA, as well as one with the President, and countless telephone calls during the day, dealt with this issue. At 11:45 a.m. there was a meeting at State attended by Hilsman and others from the Intelligence and Research Bureau, Robert Manning and two deputies from Public Affairs, and representatives of the CIA, at which there was discussion of what would be told the ambassadors and the press. The meeting promptly turned into a discussion of the  problem, and resulted in further telephone

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~

56

92.

calls to the White House. In the end it was decided to exhibit a selection of blow-ups to the ambassadors and the press, but not to release them for publication or general circulation. The briefers heading for London, Paris, and Bonn were also authorized to show the photographs to key people within each government, but not to release them.

There was some nervousness around noon in the White House and elsewhere as the result of a report relayed by a U.S. network television correspondent that Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko was planning to make an important statement at 2:00 p.m. Discreet inquiries were set in motion. It appeared that Gromyko would be departing from New York International Airport at about that hour. Arrangements were made to monitor his statement, and to proceed at once if necessary with an announcement of the Quarantine. As it turned out, he merely said a few words of farewell suitable

~~TOP SECRET~~



93.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

to the occasion of his departure from the United States.

Additional steps to link the key action centers in the government were taken. The State Department detailed three officers full time to the Battle Staff Roster at the Pentagon to facilitate communications with the Defense Department. These officers were taken from the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs and the Bureau of European Affairs (the two Bureaus most directly concerned with the exercise), until Tuesday, when they were replaced by staff from the Operations Center.

Work proceeded meanwhile on a number of writing and drafting projects. In New York, Adlai Stevenson and his staff, assisted by Arthur Schlesinger, worked on the speech the Ambassador was to give in the United Nations. At the State Department, work continued on the two proposed O.A.S. resolutions, one converting the Council into an Organ of Consultation, the other seeking support for the course of

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

94.

action proposed by the United States. The action resolution was not completed and cleared until Monday noon, when it was sent to our Ambassadors in Latin America with instructions to transmit it to the O.A.S. Foreign Ministers and Presidents.

At 12 noon Monday, October 22, the crisis for the first time became visible - though not yet in substance. At that hour Pierre Salinger, the White House news secretary, announced that the President would make an important statement at 7:00 p.m. He also requested air time for the President's speech from the radio and television networks, which was promptly granted.

At 3:00 p.m. the President convened a formal meeting of the National Security Council. The only person previously

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

56

95.


absent that this brought into the picture was Edward A. McDermott, head of the Office of Emergency Planning. The other members of the N.S.C. were all on the ~~Excomm~~ Excomm, the informal working group that had been meeting night and day for nearly a week. (Vice President Johnson/<sup>had</sup> a special/<sup>role.</sup> He was, of course a member of the National Security Council, but he did not take part in many of the Excomm meetings. As Vice President he was, on the whole, a fully informed and active participant in making of key decisions.) During the N.S.C. meeting the President formally established the Excomm and asked it to meet with him daily at 10:00 a.m.


The President cautioned the group against the dangers that could flow from any appearances of disunity within the government. It was essential that all support the course of action that had been adopted, and, for public purposes at

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

96.

least, to "sing one song." He reviewed again the chief arguments against the air strike -- the Pearl Harbor analogy and the chance that it was not certain that all the missiles could be erased in one operation. He recalled that no one had thought that nothing should be done. He also reminded his associates that it might yet be necessary to invade or take other action, and raised the question of what should be done if  He emphasized the importance of not saying an air attack or invasion were actively considered. The course adopted was to be viewed as the consensus which all had helped reach.

Discussion also covered the chain of reasoning behind not having acted sooner. Why, for example, was a full quarantine not instituted in August? The main reason was the absence of hard intelligence information. The scattered  reports about objects that might or might not have been

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

97.

missiles were not sufficient to commit the United States to a major initiative in the Cold War. Quite aside from our own position, it would have been impossible to win support for our action from the O.A.S. or our NATO allies (some of whom thought the U.S. had a "fixation" about Cuba, it was remarked) until irrefutable evidence of the Soviet Union's offensive designs was available. Underlining all these considerations was the fact that expert Sovietologists had been unanimous in the opinion that introduction by the Soviets of offensive missiles into Cuba was highly improbable.

One other subject was touched on: the possible analogy between the Soviet missiles and our own Jupiter installations in Turkey and Italy. This was seen as a problem of public affairs, not policy, and the types of arguments and responses which would be most appropriate were reviewed.

At 4:00 p.m. the Cabinet met and was given a briefing by

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

98.

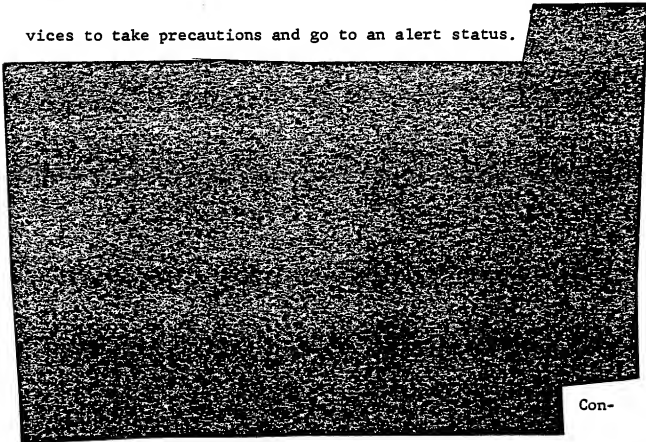
the President and John McCone: Congressional leaders, who had been called that morning by Larry O'Brien and his staff, assembled at the White House at 5:00 p.m. A few had returned to Washington at near-super-sonic speeds in the military jets laid on by General McHugh. The President conducted the briefing with the assistance of Secretary Rusk and an intelligence officer. Aerial photographs were displayed and explained, and the President outlined what he planned to do. The Congressional leaders expressed support, though some thought he would have to go beyond the act of quarantine to an air strike or invasion. The President listened to their comments but did not change his position.

At 5:00 p.m. George Ball talked at the President's request to James Reston of the New York Times, columnist Joseph Alsop, and Washington Post editor Alfred Friendly, filling them in on details of the crisis and the proposed U.S. response. Walter Lippmann was also invited to attend but was not able to do so.

99.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

During the afternoon each U.S. Ambassador in Latin America, having been cued by the "go" signal, called on the Foreign Minister to whom he was accredited, to tell him there was a likelihood of Communist demonstrations that evening and to suggest that it would be a good idea for the local security services to take precautions and go to an alert status.



Con-

tingency / <sup>preparations</sup> had been made for evacuation and life protection of U.S. nationals in each Latin American country.

At approximately 6 o'clock -- or as close to that hour as could

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

100.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

be arranged -- all the Latin American Presidents were given the text or a summary of the President's speech in Spanish, a letter from the President, and a copy of the proposed action resolution in the O.A.S. They were also informed that the O.A.S. Council would be convened the next morning at nine. Each President was asked to send instructions promptly to Washington. To expedite communications, the State Department asked the American Telephone and Telegraph company to give top priority to calls between the O.A.S. representatives in Washington and their Presidents and Foreign Ministers in the Latin American capitals.

Extraordinary steps had to be taken to brief the President of Mexico, Lopez Mateos, who with his Foreign Minister was in an airplane high above the Pacific. He had been in Manila and was scheduled to stop in Hawaii, so a full set of briefing materials was sent to our embassy in the Philippines and to CINCPAC, for transmittal to the Presidential party. As it turned out, CINCPAC

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

101.

got the documents to him well before the President's speech.

The U.S. Information Agency and the Voice of America had been preparing since late Friday to provide facilities for relaying the President's speech around the globe. The Acting Director of USIA, Donald M. Wilson (during Edward R. Murrow's illness) had been briefed on the crisis Friday night by high State Department officers. At that time George Ball instructed him to make plans to broadcast the President's speech to Cuba when it was delivered Sunday or Monday evening. It was decided that the most effective way to reach Cuba would be to link up a number of American medium wave stations with the Voice when the President spoke. The Voice would then stay on the air 24 hours a day in Spanish, commencing with the speech, and the medium wave stations would be urged to stay on the VOA network during the crisis period.

Newton M. Minow, Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, came to the White House Monday morning to join Wilson

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

and VOA Director Henry Loomis in making arrangements for the link-ups. Nine radio stations were selected to join the VOA network. Direct telephone lines to the stations from the White House were readied. At 6:00 p.m. Pierre Salinger telephoned the heads of the nine stations to request their cooperation, which was readily given. As soon as Salinger received each approval, Loomis called the station again to advise on the technical arrangements that had been made for the telephone lines. By 6:30 p.m. the hook-ups were completed, and at 7:00 p.m. all the stations were on the air. In addition to the Voice transmissions, USIA put the speech and subsequent statements on its worldwide Wireless File, often in several languages. They also made use of their fast shipping facilities to send photographs, tapes, and films of the President's speech to all parts of the world.

At the State Department careful checks were made to ascertain that the key messages had been received by all designated

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

103.

recipients. (The heavy cable traffic, nearly all of it top secret, had strained the Department's code and communications facilities to the limit.) Telephone calls were placed "in the clear" to key Embassies in Europe. In guarded language Washington verified that the messages had in fact gotten through and that preparations for P Hour were going as planned. In addition, last-minute changes in the speech and in the instructions for delivering it and the official letters to the host governments were radioed to posts during the afternoon.

In the course of checking it was learned that the radio relay station in Nicosia, Cyprus had encountered atmospheric conditions which blocked transmissions to some embassies in Africa. By the time this was discovered it was too late to do anything about it, so official notice of what the U.S. proposed to do was given to those nations through their embassies in Washington.

Clocks in the European capitals were five hours ahead of Washington, and it was well into the evening when Dean Acheson

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

called on President de Gaulle at the Elysee Palace to inform him of what the United States proposed to do. Acheson was accompanied by an intelligence briefer, who displayed several [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to the French President. De Gaulle paid close attention to Acheson's briefing and expressed support for the United States policy. He said that President Kennedy was entirely right to make a firm response to the Soviet move and assured Acheson of France's cooperation.

At about the same time Ambassador Bruce in London briefed Prime Minister MacMillan and Ambassador Dowling in Bonn briefed Chancellor Adenauer. Both heads of government expressed support for what the President proposed to do. Later that evening Acheson appeared before a special session of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Council to explain the reasons for the US action and why it had not been possible to consult fully in advance. He was given a courteous reception and received expressions of support from the allies.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~

56

At 6:26 p.m. the State Department logged receipt of a letter to President Kennedy from Prime Minister MacMillan. The letter read (in part):

"I quite understand how fiercely American public opinion will react when it knows these facts (of the Soviet buildup in Cuba.) ... We shall of course give you all the support we can in the Security Council .... Hope you will provide us with the best legal case that can be made ... There may be controversy on this ... However, we must rest not so much on precedent as on the unprecedented condition of the modern world in a nuclear age.

"What will be Khrushchev's reaction? He may try to escort his ships into the Caribbean and force you to attack them. This 'fire - first' dilemma has always worried us and we have always hoped to impale the Russians on this horn.

"We must be ready for retaliatory action against

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

56

106.

Berlin ...(as well as for) pressure on the weaker parts of the Free World defense system."

The President did not see the letter until after his speech.

Later that evening a reply responding to each point in the letter was sent from Kennedy to MacMillan.

At 6:00 p.m. Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin was ushered into Secretary Rusk's blue-carpeted 7th floor office at the State Department. At the same hour Adlai Stevenson called on the U.N. Secretary General to inform him of the President's speech and of the impending U.S. request that a meeting of the Security Council be convened. At 6:15 the Ambassadors in Washington from the NATO, SEATO, and CENTO countries were given a detailed background briefing in the International Conference Room at the State Department by Under Secretary Ball and Roger Hilsman. Forty-six ambassadors and chargés attended. Aerial photographs showing the erected missile launchers and missile site constructions

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

107.

at several locations in Cuba, were shown. A television set had been placed on the front rostrum, and most of the ambassadors remained to watch the President's speech.

When Dobrynin emerged from Rusk's office he was brusque to reporters, who described him as "ashen." At virtually the same time he was being briefed Ambassador Foy Kohler, only recently arrived in Moscow, called at the Kremlin to deliver a letter from President Kennedy and the text of the speech. He did not see any Soviet officials of high rank, and there was no immediate Soviet response.

At 7:00 p.m. -- P Hour -- the President spoke. His voice and image/ were carried on all the major networks and on a large majority of the nation's broadcasting stations. Shortwave radio carried his voice to Europe and Latin America. Nine stations, under arrangements made by the White House and USIA, broadcast the speech in Spanish on commercial frequencies to Latin America.

108.

~~TOP SECRET~~  
~~EYES ONLY~~

At the same hour the Defense Department ordered a world-wide alert status designated DEFCON 3. It had the effect of signalling all U.S. military elements to assume and increased state of readiness.

At 7:30 p.m. Assistant Secretary Martin conducted a further closed-door briefing for Latin American Ambassadors in the Under Secretary's Conference room. At the same hour Ambassador Stevenson called on Valerian A. Zorin, chief Soviet delegate to the UN, in his capacity as President of the Security Council for the month of October, and gave him a letter requesting that he summon an urgent meeting of the Council. Stevenson also transmitted the text of a draft resolution for the Security Council calling on the Soviet Union to dismantle and withdraw the missiles under UN verification.

At 8:00 p.m. Secretary Rusk spoke to a meeting of all other Ambassadors in Washington, and a background briefing for the

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~EYES ONLY~~



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

109.

press was held in the small auditorium in the east wing of the State Department. This briefing was conducted by George Ball, was flanked by U. Alexis Johnson, Legal Advisor Abram Chayes, who Intelligence and Research Director Roger Hilsman, and Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Robert J. Manning. A similar briefing for Pentagon reporters was held by Secretary McNamara at 8:00 p.m.

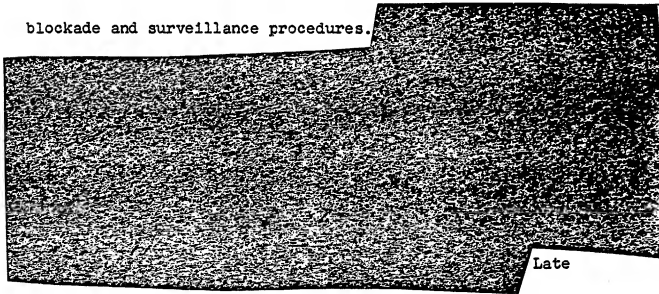
A special concert commemorating the 17th anniversary of the Founding of the United Nations took place that evening in the State Department auditorium. Some of the top-level guests -- among them Secretary Rusk -- were absent from the back-tie audience. But Assistant Secretary Martin attended, and managed to beard two ambassadors -- those from Ecuador and Guatemala -- for a bit of private diplomacy during the intermission.

During the evening at the Pentagon mobilization planning was reviewed and preparations were ordered for a possible call-up of reserves. Secretary McNamara ordered an acceleration of the

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

110.

induction and training of Cuban nationals. From 10:40 to 11:25 he met with the Chief of Naval Operations for a discussion of blockade and surveillance procedures.



Late

that night U.S. dependents from the Guantanamo naval base began to arrive in the U.S.

That evening the public affairs bureaus at State and the Pentagon went on a 24-hour schedule. At least one principal officer was on duty in the two bureaus at all times. Throughout both Departments, and in the White House, key personnel remained in their offices or on call through the nights. At State, for example, George Ball and Alexis Johnson had been alternating

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

56

111.

on the night shift since Friday. Intelligence officers did much of their work at night, so as to have reports completed for early morning briefings and meetings of the Excomm. Portable cots were set up in a number of offices.

Late Monday night Lord Bertrand Russell, the British philosopher and pacifist, unable to sleep after hearing the President's speech, sent telegrams to Kennedy, Khrushchev, Macmillan, Gaitskell, and U Thant, calling on them and the world to take immediate steps to halt what he viewed as a headlong plunge into the maelstrom of nuclear war.

(A summary of the State Department's activities in the forty-eight hours of Sunday and Monday, October 21-22, follows on Pages 111a and 111b.)

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

Summary of Activities  
Midnight October 20 to midnight October 22, 1962

In the 48 hours from midnight Saturday, October 20 to midnight Monday, October 22, the State Department, working in augmented shifts around the clock, accomplished the following tasks:

- 1) Informed 21 Embassies in Latin America of the up-coming President's speech and instructed them on approaches to the various governments;
- 2) Dispatched special briefing officers to London, Paris, Bonn;
- 3) Sent the text of the President's speech and a letter from the President to Khrushchev to Embassy Moscow and handed the same documents to the Soviet Ambassador in Washington;
- 4) Dispatched individual letters from the President to:  

Prime Minister Macmillan  
General de Gaulle  
Prime Minister Nehru  
Chancellor Adenauer  
Prime Minister Diefenbaker  
Prime Minister Fanfani  
Mayor Brandt;
- 5) Sent instructions to 60 US Embassies in all parts of the world regarding delivery of the President's speech, and a letter in some cases, to the Head of Government;
- 6) Dispatched a letter from the President to the Chief of State of 21 Latin American countries;
- 7) Dispatched a letter from the President to the Heads of Government in 18 countries with which we have alliances or who are represented on the Security Council;
- 8) Warned 134 Embassies and Consulates to take precautions against hostile demonstrations;
- 9) Sent text of President's speech to 129 Embassies and Consulates;

10) Informed

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

- 10) Informed 21 Embassies in Latin American countries of our call for an O.S meeting for October 23 and furnished them the text of a proposed O.S resolution;
- 11) Sent text of draft Security Council resolution to 21 Latin American countries and 7 countries which are members of the Security Council;
- 12) Provided an oral briefing on the situation to 95 foreign Ambassadors by top State Department officials;
- 13) Delivered a letter to the Security Council President calling for an urgent SC meeting and enclosing a draft resolution;
- 14) Provided a background briefing to the press by high State Department officials.

Summary

Transmitted 15 separate Presidential letters or other documents to a total of 441 recipients, with appropriate instructions. Provided oral briefings to 95 foreign Ambassadors and an unknown number of American newsmen.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

112.

Tuesday, October 23: Success in the O.A.S.

Tuesday morning dawned. That in itself, in the eyes of some senior officials, represented a certain victory. The chance that hot-headed Cubans might have responded to the President's speech by seizing the missiles and irrationally firing them at the U.S., or that the Soviets themselves might have taken precipitate action, was never out of anyone's mind. With U.S. nuclear forces in a fully alert status, ready to respond if ordered, the northern hemisphere might have been well on its way to incineration. Secretary Rusk remarked to George Ball as he arrived at his office that morning: "We've won a considerable victory; you and I are still here." That was not the only optimistic note, though.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

113.

In a similar negative sense, 'a number of things had not happened. The Soviets had not closed the autobahn leading from West Germany to Berlin. They had not made a conventional or nuclear bombing attack on the Jupiters in Italy and Turkey. They had not sealed off the Dardanelles. Most important, they had not as of that moment perceptibly accelerated the construction of missile launchers in Cuba. None of the weapons appeared to be ready to fire, and no rapid preparations to make them so seemed to have occurred.

At 9:00 am the O.A.S. Council convened in the Pan American building on 17th Street. Secretary Rusk made the main speech advocating that the Council transform itself into an organ of consultation under the immediate emergency provisions of the Charter. He also offered the U.S. draft resolution to authorize the use of force, individually and collectively, by O.A.S. members, to enforce the blockade, and cited terms of the 1947 Rio Pact as authority for this step.

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~EYES ONLY~~

56

The Council met through much of the day, reconvening formally at 3:00 p.m. Many of the delegates were in need of instructions from their home governments and so made full use of the priority lines arranged by AT & T. The two most important countries which hesitated before committing themselves to support the U.S. proposal were Brazil and Mexico. Both governments felt a general hesitancy about moving so fast and also raised the constitutional question about the authority of the Council to transform itself into an organ of consultation. The real motives standing behind these legalisms undoubtedly related to domestic politics. Both Presidents had been elected with the support of left-leaning elements who tended to view Castro as an authentic Latin folk hero. They did not want to commit their governments to actions which would alienate these groups and which might provoke demonstrations and riots.

Assistant Secretary Martin added his persuasive powers to the Secretary's, holding constant private meetings with the

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~EYES ONLY~~



~~TOP SECRET~~

Mexican Ambassador and the two Brazilian ambassadors, one to the U.S., the other to the O.A.S. He also telephoned our ambassadors in Rio de Janeiro and Mexico City to coordinate efforts and apply maximum pressure. Secretary Rusk called the Mexican foreign minister by telephone at his hotel in Honolulu. In the end, both countries cast their votes for the Resolutions, though Brazil abstained on one point relating to invasion.

At the time Bolivia was absenting itself from the O.A.S. in connection with a dispute with Chile. Unable to get a satisfactory telephone connection with La Paz the Bolivian Ambassador, Emilio Sarmiento Carruncho, attended the meetings anyway and cast his country's vote for the resolutions, remarking to Assistant Secretary Martin that he might soon be needing a job. The Uruguayan delegate, Emilio Oribe, was unable to get instructions from his government in time for the vote shortly before 5:00 p.m. (His country/<sup>was</sup> governed by

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~

116.

a nine-man council who had to be unanimous before any action could be taken. Not all of them could be located in time to give their assent.) So the vote was 19-0, with Uruguay abstaining. Uruguay recorded its affirmative vote the next day, making it a unanimous 20-0. The unanimity of the council, due in considerable part to shrewd diplomacy by State Department officials, was viewed by many as an important factor in blunting a possible Soviet propaganda rejoinder to the President's speech. Commenting on the OAS decision on October 24, the New York Times said: "(In) the greatest display of Western Hemispheric solidarity since the days of World War II, Latin America acted swiftly to join the United States in recommending all necessary measures to halt the flow of offensive weapons to Cuba from the Soviet bloc."

At 4:00 p.m. Adlai Stevenson delivered his opening statement to the specially-convened meeting of the Security Council. By the time the meeting began, the Soviet Union and Cuba had hurriedly

117.

introduced two parallel letters to the President of the Security Council (in Zorin's case, the letter was addressed to himself) also requesting an urgent meeting of the Council in a desperate attempt to alter the focus of the issue. They alleged that the U.S. countermeasures and "aggressive action against Cuba" were the real threat to peace in the Caribbean.

In the course of his speech, Stevenson charged that the Soviet Union had converted Cuba into "a bridgehead and staging area" in the Western Hemisphere and urged the Council to call for the immediate withdrawal of missiles and other offensive weapons from Cuba. He traced the "vast plan of piecemeal aggression" and "the basic drive to abolish the world of the Charter" which had characterized Soviet policy in the post-war years and which had not been altered by the present Soviet Government. "The Castro regime," he pointed out, "has aided and abetted an invasion of this hemisphere" by inviting "an extra-continental, anti-democratic and expansionist power into the bosom of the American family" and

118.

by making itself "an accomplice in the communist enterprise of world domination." The day of forbearance is past, he concluded. "If the United States and the other nations of the Western Hemisphere should accept this new phase of aggression, we would be delinquent in our obligations to world peace".

While Stevenson was speaking a note was passed to him by Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Harlan Cleveland. It was from Assistant Secretary Martin in Washington reporting the unanimous OAS support for the U.S. position. Stevenson promptly read the note to the Security Council, a scene observed by millions on television.

When Stevenson concluded, the Cuban representative, Sr. Garcia Inchaustegui spoke. He denounced the U.S. quarantine action as an "act of war" and declared that the Cuban people had answered the armed attack with general mobilization. He asked the Council to call for the immediate withdrawal of all troops, ships and planes deployed on the approaches to Cuban shores, and for the

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

119

cessation of all interventionist measures. He also declared that the United States had no right to ask for dismantling and disarmament and that "logically, UN observers should be sent

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

120.

to the US bases from which invaders and pirates emerge to punish and harass a small state." He insisted that Cuba "will not accept any kind of observers in matters which fall within our domestic jurisdiction."

The Soviet representative spoke next. He declared that the US charges were "completely false" and "a clumsy attempt to cover up aggressive actions" in Cuba. He described the US quarantine as a "new and extremely dangerous act of aggression" and as "undisguised piracy." During this first encounter, Ambassador Zorin flatly declared that accusations that the Soviet Union had "set up offensive armaments in Cuba" were false, and officially confirmed the statement already made by the Soviet Union in this connection, "that the Soviet Government has not directed and is not directing to Cuba any offensive armaments." He also recalled the statement that the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Gromyko, had made in the General Assembly just a month previously (September 21,

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

56

121.

1962) that "any sober-minded man knows that Cuba is not.... building up air forces to such a degree that we can pose a threat to the United States or ....to any state of the Western Hemisphere." Starting from these premises --- which were to crumble a few days later when Chairman Khrushchev agreed to dismantle and remove the supposedly non-existent offensive weapons--Ambassador Zorin submitted to the Security Council a special statement published by the Government of the Soviet Union that day which addressed a "serious warning to the United States Government, to advise it that, in carrying out the measures announced by President Kennedy, it is taking on itself a heavy responsibility for the fate of the world, and recklessly playing with fire." The statement declared that the Soviet Government will do "everything in its power to frustrate the aggressive designs of U.S. imperialistic circles," and appealed to all Governments and peoples to raise their voices in protest against the "aggressive acts" of the US and strongly

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~  
~~EYES ONLY~~

56

to condemn such acts. Ambassador Zorin attempted to associate neutrals with his cause by quoting earlier statements by a number of countries (UAR, Algeria, Iraq) in support of Cuba and critical of alleged interferences in its internal affairs. He introduced a draft resolution condemning the "actions of the Government of the United States designed to violate the Charter of the UN and to intensify the threat of war." The Soviet resolution insisted that the United States "repeal its decision on the control of ships of other states going towards the shores of Cuba," and called upon the US, Cuba, and USSR "to establish contacts and enter into negotiations for the purpose of normalizing the situation and thereby removing the threat of war.

At the request of the representative of Ghana the meeting was adjourned to the following morning so that representatives might consult with other delegations outside the Council who

~~TOP SECRET~~  
~~EYES ONLY~~



123.

were devising various compromises for tranquilizing the issue.

Meanwhile, at the State Department special instructions to our Ambassadors in Venezuela and Chile were being readied. These two countries were especially important because of their membership on the Security Council. Our Ambassadors were told to talk to the Presidents and Foreign Ministers in a special effort to make sure they would support the U.S. position -- which they did.

While this overt activity in the U.N. and O.A.S. was in motion, the Excomm met with the President at 10:00 a.m. and again at 6:00 p.m. In the morning the President approved the final test and issuance of the Proclamation of Interdiction. He also signed an Executive Order authorizing extension of tours of duty for certain members of the armed forces. Three subcommittees of the Excomm were established:

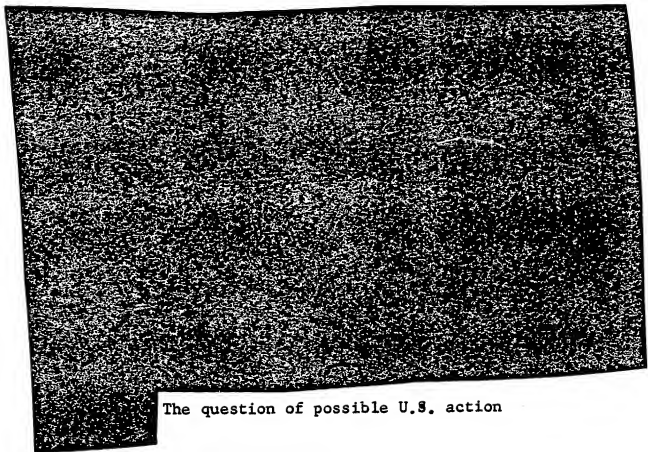
124.

one on Berlin problems, one on advance planning, and one on communications. Walt W. Rostow was formally designated to head the advance planning group. Jerome Wiesner, the President's Science Advisor was asked to direct the group examining the government's world wide communications capability. The President also asked Paul Nitze to head a committee to think about problems of inter-allied relationships.

It was considered essential to find out if work on the missiles was continuing. With that imperative in mind the President ordered a sharp increase in low-level reconnaissance over the known sites. Clusters of Navy P-8U aircraft performed the missions. The read-out on the pictures they took became available late that evening and early the next morning. It revealed that work on the missile sites was continuing.

124(a). ~~TOP SECRET~~  
EYES ONLY

A meeting of the 'Ambassadorial Group,' which normally discusses Berlin, took place at the State Department during the day. Its membership consists of the British, French, and German Ambassadors, plus an American representative.



The question of possible U.S. action

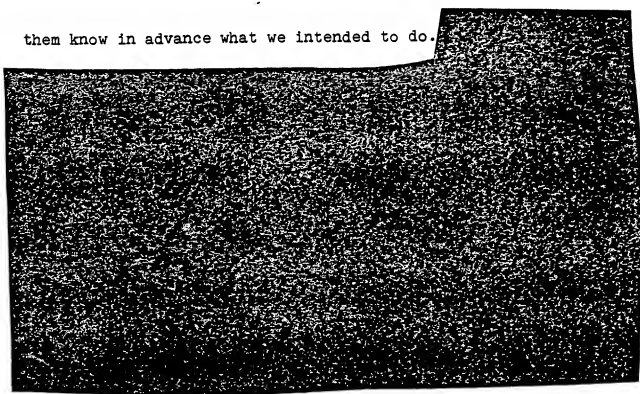
~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

125.

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

against SAM sites in Cuba was also raised. No U.S. policy on the subject was expressed.

These matters were discussed in Mr. Nitze's committee later in the day, or the next day. It was felt that it would be advisable, as far as possible, to tie the British, French, and Germans into the action we were taking in Cuba by letting them know in advance what we intended to do.



During the day Secretary Rusk transmitted to the White House a memorandum prepared by Assistant Secretary for European Affairs William Tyler, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

and South Asian Affairs Phillips Talbot, and Policy Planning head Walt W. Rostow, proposing that:

1) We promptly announce our support for an early MRBM deployment in Europe, stating that we would join in such a program as soon as four or five nations decide to participate. The Germans, Italians, Belgians, Turks, and Canadians have favored such a step and would probably respond with a strong show of interest.

2) We privately urge the Turks to announce that they are willing to phase out land based IRBM's as soon as it is clear that a multilateral sea-based force would be at hand in the eastern Mediterranean to take its place.

3) There would then be an exchange of declarations by the Great Powers that they will desist from deploying MRBM's to two troubled areas of the globe: the Caribbean and the Middle East.

The memorandum, interesting in part for its relevance to

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

future discussions of nuclear sharing and the multi-lateral force, took account of the European concern about Soviet MRBM's threatening their home territories. It was designed to show Europeans that the Cuban crisis, far from diverting the United States from its positive long term policies in Europe, had intensified our desire to prosecute these policies. The initial costs of a modest force (ten ships, eighty missiles) could be shared by the United States and the participating European nations, and the U.S., as a transitional measure, at least, could keep custody of the nuclear warheads. The multilateral concept, according to the memo, had aroused great interest in the North Atlantic Council. It would help stave off pressure for bilateral sharing with France. If the policy was adopted it could have the effect of closing out the crisis before mounting public pressures and possible incidents in the blockade might result in increased risks of war and divisive pressures within the alliance. It would also permit us to

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

draw positive advantage from the crisis in pursuing our own positive goals in Europe.

During the/ <sup>afternoon (morning</sup> in Washington) Dean Acheson went to Bonn to talk to Chancellor Adenauer and German Defense Minister Franz Joseph Strauss. Both gave Acheson a cordial reception and expressed full support for the President's action. The British government, meanwhile, issued a statement expressing "deep concern at the provocative action of the Soviet Union in placing offensive nuclear weapons in Cuba," and declar<sup>ing</sup> its support for the U.S. position.

At 3:00 p.m. Moscow time -- thirteen hours after the President's speech -- (8:00 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time) TASS, the Soviet news agency, began transmitting a Soviet Government statement. At the same hour U.S. Ambassador Foy Kohler was called to the Soviet Foreign Office and given a copy of the statement with a letter from Chairman Khrushchev to President

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

129.

Kennedy. Because of delays in transmission, the letter was not received in Washington until 11:56 a.m. , nearly four hours after it was handed to Kohler. The letter reflected the tone of the public statement, [REDACTED] accused the U.S. of piracy, violation of international law, and provocative acts that might lead to nuclear war, interspersed with professions of devotion to the cause of peace and denials that the missiles were in Cuba for offensive purposes. The broadcast statement said that the Soviet Union has "repeatedly declared that not a single Soviet nuclear bomb would fall either on the United States or on any other country, unless an aggression is committed. But if the aggressors touch off a war, the Soviet Union would strike a most powerful retaliatory blow." The statement insisted that the weapons in question were "aimed solely at enhancing Cuba's defense potential." Significantly, neither the letter nor the statement denied the truth of the U.S. charge that Soviet intermediate and medium range missiles had been



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

secretly introduced into Cuba.

At 7:00 p.m. the President signed the Proclamation of Interdiction in a ceremony at the White House. CINCLANT was promptly directed to enforce the quarantine in accord with instructions previously drafted. At 8:00 p.m. Secretary McNamara held a press conference at which he announced that action had been taken to deploy our forces to make effective the quarantine by 10:00 a.m. the next morning. He also announced the extension of active duty tours for certain personnel in the Navy and Marine Corps. McNamara said that 25 Soviet ships were enroute to Cuba, their course unchanged in the past 24 hours. He indicated he had given orders to interdict these and all other ships headed for Cuba, starting 10:00 a.m. the next day.

Before the night was out messages from the President were sent to Mayor Brandt, Chancellor Adenauer, and President de Gaulle.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

131.

In London, leaders of the Labor Party, including Hugh Gaitskell, were briefed by U. S. intelligence officers.

At 1:00 a.m. 14 aerial reconnaissance photos of the Soviet missile installations in Cuba were released to the U.S. press. They had already been given to newspapermen in London. By morning, newspaper readers and television viewers were given this visual proof of the missile build-up.

Wednesday, October 24: The U.N. Holds the Stage

At 9:00 a.m. the Security Council met and heard the representatives of Venezuela, Sr. Sosa Rodriguez, associate the Latin American nations with the U.S. stand. The weapons in Cuba, he emphasized, were no longer defensive but offensive, and they were of a magnitude that might be sufficient to wipe out any of the American republics and drag the world into the holocaust of nuclear war. He described the apprehension felt throughout the continent at Cuban subversive activities, including the introduction of agents, propaganda, and weapons

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

132.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

to equip guerrilla forces in American republics. In the light of the unanimous O.A.S. resolution, Sr. Sosa Rodriguez declared that he was speaking for the entire continent in asking the Security Council to take measures to stop nuclear weapons from arriving in Cuba and to have the presently existing bases of nuclear rockets in Cuba dismantled.

Sir Patrick Dean, Representative of the UK, noted that by no stretch even of the Soviet imagination could a nuclear missile with a range of 2,200 miles in Cuba be called defensive, and recalled assurances on this point by Mr. Gromyko and President Dorticos of Cuba in the General Assembly the previous month. While the Soviet Government were acting their lie, he stated, the orders were being given, plans laid and preparations being made for the supply of missiles to Cuba. Who could possibly believe in the honesty of the Soviet Government's intention in these circumstances? The United Kingdom, he

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

133.

concluded, considered that the United States Government acted properly by coming to the Security Council at the first possible moment. Now the Security Council must take immediate and urgent steps to have these offensive missiles dismantled and withdrawn.

The speech by the Representative of Rumania, Mr. Malitza, was an exercise in fealty which supported the position of the Soviet Union and called for condemnation of the US and "immediate annulment" of the naval blockade. The Irish Representative, Mr. Aiken, underlined world concern with the growth of the Soviet intervention in Cuba.

He said that he perceived some common ground in the US statement to the Security Council of October 22 which declared US willingness to confer with the Soviet Union on measures to remove the existing threat to security of the Western Hemisphere, and in the Soviet draft resolution which proposed that the US,

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

134.

USSR and Cuba should establish contacts and enter into negotiations. In both cases the contacts and negotiations were suggested as the first step in a wider scheme of proposals, but he warned that only through negotiation at the start could agreement come.

Mr. Aiken's speech adumbrated the anxiety of the smaller powers who were grasping for some compromise formula, no matter how tenuous, to defuse the crisis. Before the Security Council

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

135.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

reconvened that afternoon several mediation efforts were floated in the halls of the UN, most of which were prescriptions for restraint and negotiation. Many neutrals were urging the SYG to intervene, confer with the parties, and make a "balanced appeal" to both sides to refrain from aggravating action. The first versions were tentatively advanced for a standstill formula compounded of a Soviet pledge not to introduce any more offensive military equipment in exchange for lifting the quarantine, along with the stationing of UN observers in Cuba.

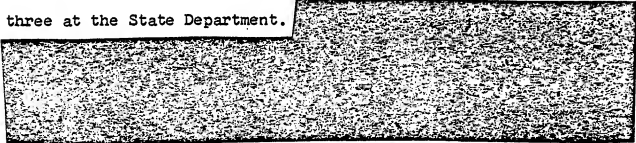
At 10:00 a.m. the quarantine came into effect. The Excomm met in the White House at the same hour. Low-level reconnaissance photographs were passed around. The pictures were of high quality, and it was decided to release them later in the day. Secretary McNamara reported on the increased state of readiness in our military forces. There was also a discussion of communications.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

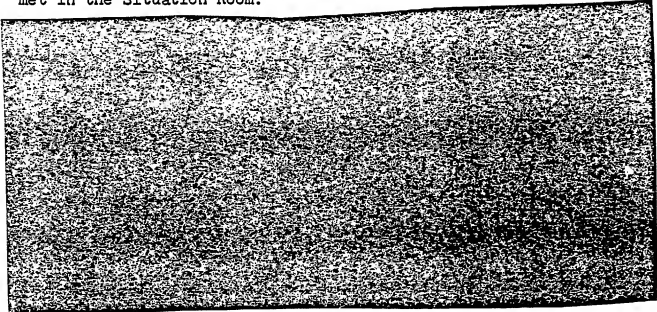
~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

⊗ At 11:00 a.m. a State Department background briefing was held for delegates of the European Broadcasting Union. Frank Stanton, President of CBS, and other prominent U.S. television officials attended. A Congressional briefing was held at the White House at 5:00 p.m., and Roger Hillsman briefed a few Congressmen at three at the State Department.



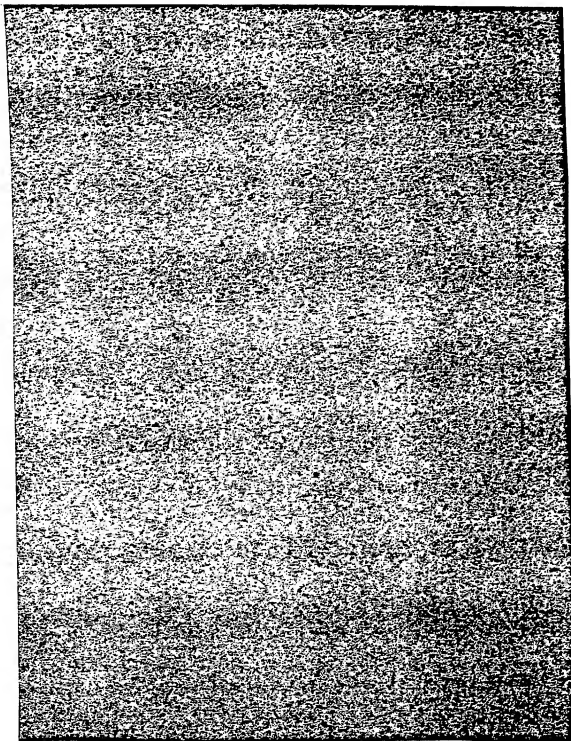
The British, French, and German ambassadors called on Secretary Rusk at three, and at the same hour several members of the Excomm met in the Situation Room.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ON.

56

-137-



~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY



138.



Wednesday afternoon the Defense Department informed military commanders and units that all release of information and other public affairs activities would be cleared through the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, Arthur Sylvester, for the duration of the crisis. Twelve types of information were listed as vital to national security and not releasable. The White House press secretary requested information media to exercise discretion in publishing information relating to national security.

At a press briefing at 4:00, Sylvester announced that there were 8 - 10 missile installations in Cuba, with about 4 launches per base; that there were at least thirty missiles and more than 20 IL-28 jet fighter bombers, as well as 5000 Soviet personnel in Cuba. At 7:35 four of the low-level reconnaissance photos discussed that morning in the Excomm

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

56

139.

were released to the news media. Sylvester also announced that the Greek oiler "Sirius" had been cleared through the quarantine.

That evening TASS released the exchange of telegrams between Bertrand Russell and Khrushchev. At 9:24 p.m. a letter from Khrushchev to the President was received at the State Department. The Soviet leader's letter was on the whole a repeat of the previous letter and broadcast statement. The President's reply was sent  $4\frac{1}{2}$  hours later, at 1:59 a.m., and was hand carried at that hour to the Soviet Embassy in Washington.

Little of this was known to Security Council when it reconvened at 6:00 p.m. During the meeting statements were made by representatives of those members who had not yet spoken: France, China, Chile, UAR, and Ghana. Apart from expressions of support for the U.S. resolution by France and

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

140.

China, the highlights of the meeting were the statement of Chile, the UAR - Ghana "restraint" resolution, and the first public intervention by the Acting Secretary General. The Representative of Chile, Mr. Schweitzer, endorsed the security measures of the regional system and expressed support for the US draft resolution. He welcomed authorization that the US draft resolution gave the Acting Secretary General to dispatch an observer corps to Cuba, / saying that Unfortunately, the representative of Cuba yesterday rejected this idea. "At such a decisive moment as this, we believe Cuba should trust the methods of the UN for putting out the flames of conflict and for ensuring peace. One such method could be to ensure the UN presence in a zone of conflict... We make a fervent and heartfelt appeal to Cuba to accept such a procedure."

The UAR representative, Mr. Mahmoud Riad, declared that his country "cannot condone the unilateral decision of the U.S.A. to exercise the quarantine" which he characterized as

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

141.

contrary to international law and likely to increase world tension. He recalled that Dr. Dorticos had told the General Assembly that the weapons Cuba had acquired were "defensive in nature" and called for "normalization" of relations between Cuba and the U.S. The Ghana representative, Mr. Quaison-Sackey, took a similar position, adding that he had no "incontrovertible proof...as to the offensive character of military developments in Cuba" and therefore could not condone the quarantine. The UAR-Ghana joint draft resolution requested the Acting Secretary General "to promptly confer with parties directly concerned on immediate steps to be taken to remove the existing threat to world peace, and to normalize the situation in the Caribbean," called on the parties concerned to comply forthwith with the resolution and provide every assistance to the Acting Secretary General, and called on the parties concerned "to refrain meanwhile from any action

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

142.

which may directly or indirectly further aggravate the situation."

The formula proposed by the so-called unaligned countries was thus limited to a general appeal for mediation by the Secretary General, but provided neither for the suspension of the Soviet offensive buildup nor for UN involvement in inspection and verification.

U Thant Proposal of October 24

At the close of the meeting the Acting Secretary General addressed an urgent appeal to President Kennedy and Chairman Khrushchev "at the request of the permanent representatives of a large number of Member Governments." His message asked that all concerned refrain from any action that may aggravate the situation, and that time should be given to enable the parties concerned to get together with a view to resolving the present crisis peacefully and normalizing the situation in the Caribbean. Specifically, U Thant proposed the voluntary suspension for a period of two to three weeks of

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

143.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

all arms shipments to Cuba, and also the voluntary suspension of the quarantine measures involving the searching of ships bound for Cuba. Thant believed that such a cooling-off period would give time to the parties to "meet and discuss," and for the first time he offered to "make myself available to all parties for whatever services I may be able to perform."

In addition he addressed an urgent appeal to Cuba to enter into negotiations while suspending the "construction and development of major military facilities and installations."

President Kennedy's reply to this appeal, which was sent at 2:19 the next afternoon, invited preliminary talks to determine whether satisfactory arrangements could be made, stating that "Ambassador Stevenson is ready to discuss these arrangements with you." At the same time the letter reminded the Secretary General that the threat "was created by the secret introduction of offensive weapons into Cuba, and the

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

144.

answer lies in the removal of such weapons." The language was diplomatic, but the point was blunt: the U.S. would not accept the U Thant proposal, since it did not compel the removal of the missiles under adequate inspection.

Premier Khrushchev welcomed Thant's initiative and declared that he agreed with the proposal, "which accords with the interests of peace." Khrushchev characterized the situation "as highly dangerous and calling for the immediate intervention by the United Nations."

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

145.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

Unbeknownst to the Security Council, U Thant had already sent a private appeal to Kennedy and Khrushchev at 2 o'clock that afternoon. It expressed a similar hope that the two great powers would avoid any confrontations that would risk general war. The President replied privately to that letter that same evening.

In the Canadian House of Commons that afternoon Prime Minister Diefenbaker said that the Soviet offensive weapons in Cuba are "a direct and immediate menace to Canada" and "a serious menace to the deterrent and strategic strength of the whole Western alliance on which our security is founded." Macmillan in the House of Commons in London, while not specifically endorsing the U.S. blockade, stated that the measures taken by President Kennedy are not "extreme" since they are "designed to meet a situation without precedent." He said he hoped that a peaceful solution to the crisis will soon be found which will make it possible "to move to a wider field of

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

146.

negotiation," but added, "I think what has happened in the last few weeks must confirm our view that in these grave matters we cannot rest upon mere words and promises. These need, if they are to restore confidence, to be independently verified and confirmed."

In a House of Commons statement eight months later in connection with the Profumo scandal Macmillan said: "...the week of the Cuba crisis -- and I have been through some in peace and war -- was the week of most strain I can remember in my life. It ~~z~~ then seemed to many of us ... that in the struggle of wills between the Soviet Union and the Western powers, primarily the United States, the world might be coming to the brink of war. During that week, as the pressures developed and built up to the climax on Friday and Saturday, the strain was certainly very great."

He went on to say on the same occasion (June 17, 1963) that during the crisis week the Soviet government "were doing

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

147.

56  
~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

all they could do to further policy and weaken the resolution of the West." Part of the effort was private: "For example, Mr. Loginov, the Soviet Charge D'Affaires (in London) called on the Foreign Secretary on the 25th of October ... and expressed the hope that Her Majesty's Government would do all in their power to avert developments in Cuba which, as he said, could push the world to the brink of a military catastrophe."

He then gave the following account of another initiative by a Soviet embassy employee, Yevgeni E. Ivanov, whose name had become well-known because of his connection with London and the society osteopath, Steven Ward. playgirl Christine Keeley. Macmillan stated:

"On 24th October, 1962, Mr. Ward telephoned the Resident Clerk at the Foreign Office and gave him to pass on to Sir Harold Caccia, an account of a conversation he had just had with Ivanov. Among other things, Mr. Ward said that Ivanov had stated that the Americans had created a situation in which there was no opportunity for either the Americans or the Russians to compromise and that the Soviet Government looked to the United Kingdom as their one hope of conciliation. The next day, 25th October, my Honourable Friend, the Member for Fritham

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

(Sir G. Nicholson) informed Sir Hugh Stephenson, then Deputy-Under-Secretary of the Foreign Office - and I think that my Honourable Friend was one of Mr. Ward's patients - that Ivanov had been to see him to give a somewhat similar story and to ask for some indication that the British Government were considering working towards negotiations. This day was the same day as that on which the Foreign Secretary had seen Mr. Loginov: and later the same afternoon Mr. Ward spoke to Sir Harold Caccia's Private Secretary to convey similar information.

"On the following day, 26th October, Mr. Ward telephoned Lord Arran and asked to bring Ivanov to his house for discussion the next morning. Lord Arran agreed and Ivanov and Mr. Ward came to see him on 27th October. Ivanov again stated that he wished to get a message to the British Government by indirect means asking them to call a Summit Conference in London forthwith. Lord Arran repeated this initiative at the time both to my Office and to the Foreign Office and later sent in a full report.

"It is thus clear that at the time of the Cuba crisis Ivanov was using all the methods at his disposal to try to persuade the British government to take some initiative. But he was not alone in this. Nor were we in any doubt about the motives of these approaches, which must have been to drive a wedge between ourselves and the US at this very crucial moment ... Ivanov's approaches were ... only a small piece of the jigsaw; they were a natural part of the Soviet attempt to weaken our resolution. Our reply at the time was that the ordinary diplomatic channels were open."

Thursday, October 25: Implementing the Quarantine

The first intercept of a Soviet ship took place Thursday,

October 25, at 7:15 a.m., when the USS Essex made contact

with the Soviet tanker Bucharest. Aerial photographs were

quickly taken and processed, and by 10:00 it was possible

to confirm that there was no deck cargo of any interest on the

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

149.

~~TOP SECRET~~  
EYES ONLY

Bucharest. It was plainly an ordinary tanker, and after discussion between the President, Rusk, and McNamara, it was permitted to proceed, though U.S. ships contained to trail it until early evening.

The Excomm met at 10:00 and opened with a report on the military situation. There was discussion of which Soviet ships to intercept and board, and <sup>on</sup> procedures to govern the boarding and inspection process. The President asked about the possibilities of a leaflet drop on Cuba. Don Wilson of USIA was given responsibility for preparing a leaflet and making arrangements. Later in the day a draft text was checked and cleared personally by the President.

At a Defense Department news conference at 11:50 a.m., Sylvester stated that at least a dozen Soviet vessels had turned back, apparently because they were carrying offensive weapons. He also announced that the Bucharest had been intercepted and

~~TOP SECRET~~  
EYES ONLY

150.

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~EYES ONLY~~

permitted to proceed without boarding. At noon the Secretary of State gave a background briefing for U.S. correspondents, followed by a 2:00 p.m. briefing for the foreign press. Throughout the day State Department officials conducted briefings for Congressmen in Atlanta, New York City, Chicago, and San Francisco. Shortly before noon three ships carrying 2146 dependents of U.S. personnel at Guantanamo arrived at Norfolk, Virginia.

There was extensive discussion during the morning between the Pentagon, State, and the White House, concerning the selection, method, and timing of the first ship to be boarded. It was decided to board a non-Soviet ship first, one that was proceeding through the quarantine zone, carrying dry cargo (not a tanker, in other words),/ chartered by the Soviets, and registered in a neutral, not allied, nation. Such a course of action would establish the principle of the quarantine without

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~EYES ONLY~~

151.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

directly engaging the Soviet Union. The Lebanese freighter Marucla fulfilled all these requirements, and shortly after noon the decision was made to intercept and board this ship. The USS Kennedy and the USS Pierce headed in her direction throughout the afternoon. At 7:30 CINCLANT sent the order directing the Kennedy to board her. The actual boarding took place without incident at 7:50 the next morning. Arthur Sylvester announced the boarding at 10:35 a.m. on the 26th saying that the inspection team/ was still at that time. aboard/ (In fact the party had de-boarded at / 10:20 a.m.)

At 8:35 p.m. the East German passenger ship Volkerfreund with 20 students bound for Havana was cleared through the quarantine. In addition the British ship Suiaco headed for Kingston, Jamaica, and a Polish ship bound for New Orleans were allowed to proceed without inspection.

During the afternoon the Strategic Air Command -- which

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

152.

had assumed charge [REDACTED] on October 12 --  
was directed to keep CINCLANT and the Navy's air headquarters  
under CINCLANT advised [REDACTED] and to assist  
CINCLANT in sea surveillance operations. CINCLANT was directed  
to prepare for night reconnaissance missions.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

..

Shortly before the Security Council reconvened Thursday afternoon for what proved to be its last formal meeting, a second public message from U Thant was sent to Kennedy and Khrushchev, again asking that they avoid any direct confrontations of Soviet and American ships in the quarantine.

In the Council meeting Ambassador Stevenson welcomed three developments: the course adopted by the Soviet Union the previous day to avoid direct confrontations in the zone of quarantine, the assurance by Chairman Khrushchev in his letter to Earl Russell that the Soviet Union will take no reckless decisions with regard to this crisis, and "most of all" the report that Mr. Khrushchev had agreed to the proposals advanced by the SYG. Despite this whiff of euphoria the situation remained serious and Ambassador Stevenson set the theme in his opening remark by inviting the Council to address itself to "the realities of the situation posed by the build-up of nuclear striking power in Cuba."



154.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

Ambassador Stevenson cautioned the Council not to forget that "we are here today --- for one single reason: because the Soviet Union secretly introduced this menacing offensive military build-up into the island of Cuba while assuring the world that nothing was further from its thoughts." Already the Communist line, in Khrushchev's letter to Earl Russell and in Ambassador Zorin's remarks in the Council, attempted to distort the record by arguing that it was not the Soviet Union which created this threat to peace by secretly installing these weapons in Cuba, "but that it was the United States which created this crisis by discovering and reporting these installations. This is the first time, I confess, that I have ever heard it said that the crime is not the burglary but the discovery of the burglary." He noted that some representatives in the Council

      said            did  
/            they/    not know whether the Soviet Union has in fact  
built in Cuba installations capable of firing nuclear missiles

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~  
EYES ONLY

over ranges from 1,000-2,000 miles. If further doubt remained on this score, the U.S. would gladly exhibit photographic evidence to the doubtful.

One by one Ambassador Stevenson demolished Communist arguments and replied to neutral misgivings. As for the "thirty-five bases in foreign countries" which Zorin had mentioned, the fact was that there <sup>were</sup> comparable missiles with the forces of only three of our allies -- i.e., UK, Italy, Turkey -- and these were established by decision of Heads of Government in December, 1957 "which was compelled to authorize such arrangements by virtue of a prior Soviet decision to introduce its own missiles capable of destroying the countries of Western Europe." Why was it necessary for the Western Hemisphere nations to act with such speed? The "speed and stealth" of the Soviet offensive build-up in Cuba demonstrated the premeditated attempt by the Soviet Union "to confront this hemisphere with a fait accompli". If the United

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

States had not acted promptly and had delayed its counteraction, "the nuclearization of Cuba would have been quickly completed." He stressed that the US had acted promptly to put into process "the political machinery which we pray will achieve a solution to this grave crisis". The one action in the last few days which had strengthened the peace was the determination of the U.S. and its allies to stop the further spread of weapons in this hemisphere. We are now in the Security Council, Ambassador Stevenson noted, because we wish the machinery of the United Nations "to take over to reduce these tensions and to interpose itself to eliminate this aggressive threat to peace and to ensure the removal from this hemisphere of offensive nuclear weapons and the corresponding lifting of the quarantine."

The Soviet representative -- unaware of the fact that history would soon call his bluff -- chose to concentrate his speech on a challenge to the "incontrovertible facts" concerning the offensive

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

military build-up in Cuba. US charges were groundless, he asserted, and were based on "the falsified information of the United States Intelligence Agency." The "kernel of the matter" lay "in the aggressive intentions of the United States with respect to Cuba." At the end of his statement Ambassador Zorin read Chairman Khrushchev's reply to U Thant's letter, welcoming the SYG's initiative and accepting his proposal.

It was at this point, early in the evening of October 25, that the now famous encounter occurred between Stevenson and Zorin.

STEVENSON: Well, let me say something to you, Mr. Ambassador: We do have the evidence. We have it, and it is clear and incontrovertible. And let me say something else: Those weapons must be taken out of Cuba.

Next, let me say to you that, if I understood you, you said -- with a trespass on credulity that excels your best -- that our position had changed since I spoke here the other day because of

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~

158.

the pressures of world opinion and a majority of the United Nations. Well, let me say to you, sir: You are wrong again. We have had no pressure from anyone whatsoever. We came here today to indicate our willingness to discuss U Thant's proposals -- and that is the only change that has taken place.

But let me also say to you, sir, that there has been a change. You, the Soviet Union, have sent these weapons to Cuba. You, the Soviet Union, have upset the balance of power in the world. You, the Soviet Union, have created this new danger -- not the United States .....

Finally, Mr. Zorin, I remind you that the other day you did not deny the existence of these weapons. Instead, <sup>we</sup> heard that they had suddenly become defensive weapons. But today -- again, if I heard you correctly -- you say that they do not exist, or that we have not proved they exist -- and you say this with another fine flood of rhetorical scorn. All right, sir, let me ask you

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~

159.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

one simple question: Do you, Ambassador Zorin, deny that the USSR has placed and is placing medium and intermediate-range missiles and sites in Cuba? Yes or no? Do not wait for the interpretation. Yes or no?

ZORIN: I am not in an American courtroom, sir, and therefore I do not wish to answer a question that is put to me in the fashion in which a prosecutor puts questions. In due course, sir, you will have your reply.

STEVENSON: You are in the courtroom of world opinion right now, and you can answer "Yes" or "No". You have denied that they exist -- and I want to know whether I have understood you correctly

ZORIN: Will you please continue your statement, sir? You will have your answer in due course.

STEVENSON: I am prepared to wait for my answer until Hell freezes over, if that is your decision. I am also prepared to present the evidence in this room.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

The evidence presented by the United States consisted of a display of enlarged photographs and maps pinpointing the location of missile bases, complete with launching sites and supporting equipment, "in short, all of the requirements to maintain, load and fire these terrible weapons." The photographs were then made available to members for detailed examination in the Trusteeship Room following the meeting.

The Soviet representative later in the meeting attempted to reply to the US challenge by again denying the facts. He quoted from an earlier Tass publication which stated "that the Soviet Government does not need to relocate in any other country, for instance, in Cuba, the means available to it for the repelling of aggression and for retaliatory blows." "Our nuclear means are so powerful as to their explosiveness," he quoted from Tass, "and the Soviet Union has such powerful means of delivery for these nuclear weapons that there is no need to seek any further sites for them anywhere outside the borders of the Soviet Union." This, he

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

stated, was his answer to the question of the US representative.

Thus ended the exposé in the forum of the Security Council. It had become clear that Security Council action was impossible since no resolution could escape a veto. Mr. Quaison-Sackey of Ghana recalled that the SYG's appeal to the US and USSR had been made at the request of some fifty members of the organization and expressed his gratification that it had evoked generally favorable response from both sides. His understanding of the situation was that "while refraining from any action which might aggravate the situation, the parties concerned -- that is to say the United States, Cuba and the Soviet Union -- will avail themselves of the Acting SYG's offer of assistance to facilitate the negotiations on the immediate steps to be taken to remove the existing threat to peace and to normalize the situation in the Caribbean." The proposal made by the representative of the UAR, supported by Ghana, to postpone further work of the Council

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

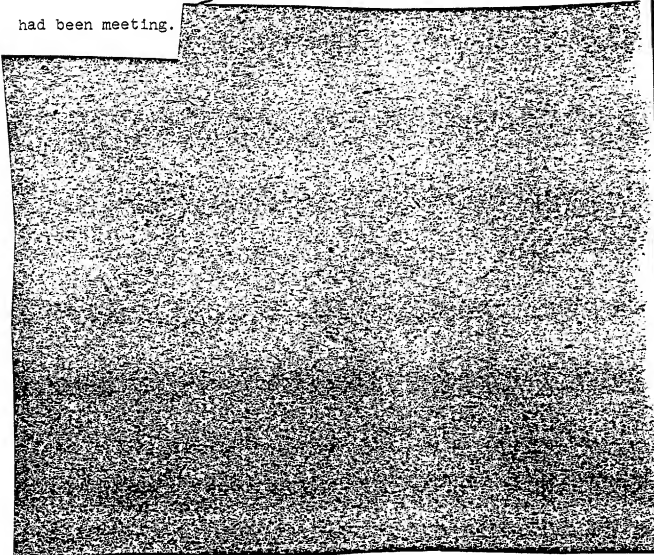


~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

162.

and to adjourn the meeting was adopted by the Security Council without objection. The Security Council thus adjourned sine die but remained "seized" of the problem while the parties negotiated.

During the day the subcommittees established by the Excomm had been meeting.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

163.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

The Planning subcommittee, with members from Defense, State, Justice, CIA, USIA, and the White House, and headed by Walt Rostow, met for the first time on the 24th, and thereafter every day. The subjects under its purview included: the shape of a possible political settlement; the possible nature of a prolonged sea war; ways to bring increased pressure on Cuba; the doctrinal basis of our position; contingency plans for a possible revolt against Castro; Soviet intentions and motivations; implications ~~fx~~ of extending the blockade to include POL or a possible airstrike. A large number of memos on these and related subjects flowed from the subcommittee to the Secretary of State, the Excomm, and the President.

Thursday afternoon an order was issued by the Defense Department stating that the prohibition on surface-to-surface missiles in the Proclamation of Interdiction covered missile propellants and other chemical compounds to power missiles.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

164.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

All U.S. embassies were instructed to inform foreign ministries and mariners of this notice. The Defense Department also issued a notice covering procedure for surfacing and identification of submarines which was relayed to all appropriate countries.

Late that night instructions were sent to all posts describing the "clearcert" procedures to be followed by vessels departing from foreign ports destined for quarantine areas.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

165

Friday, October 26: The Tension Mounts

The morning began with the successful boarding of the Marucla, which had been trailed through the night by two Navy destroyers. Though the ship was chartered to the Soviet Union, its cargo proved to be innocent (as expected) and she was permitted to continue on her way.

At 10 a.m. the Excomm met at the White House. Adlai Stevenson flew down from New York to attend this meeting. The mood was grim. The intelligence briefing, based largely on the low-level reconnaissance flights, conveyed the somber fact that construction work on the missiles continued unabated. The Soviets appeared to be seeking full operational capability as rapidly as possible. There was discussion of the ship interceptions, the quarantine and the line of response to be made to U Thant's proposal. The President said that our determination to get the missiles out of Cuba remained firm. The possibility

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

166

of an air strike against the missiles was discussed at some length. There was much speculation about Soviet intentions. Their conduct up to that time, it was felt, amounted to delaying actions and public bluster, accompanied by a few probes and feelers -- mostly directed at our allies -- aimed at searching out soft spots in our position. The President directed that low-level reconnaissance flights be maintained on a once every two-hour schedule day and night. He also authorized USIA to go ahead with the leaflet drop. A new photograph was selected from the most recent batch, one which provided unmistakable evidence of the missiles in Cuba. The President also directed Pierre Salinger to make a public statement on the continuation of missile site construction in Cuba.

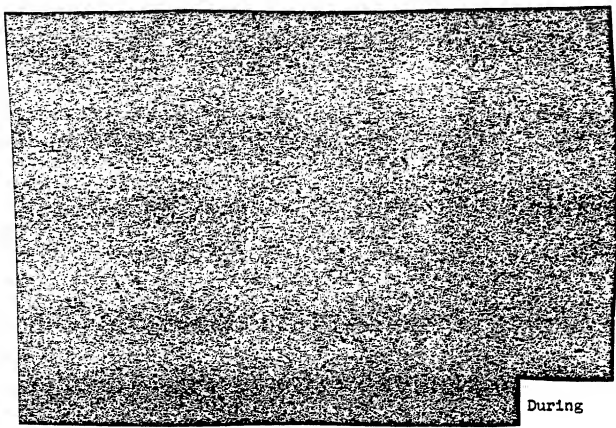
During the morning an additional 286 dependents arrived at Norfolk from Guantanamo. The Commander of the Atlantic Fleet, Admiral Robert L. Dennison, told reporters that Guantanamo could be defended in case of an attack. At 1:40 p.m.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

167

the Swedish ship Collangatta, en route from Leningrad to Havana with a cargo of potatoes, was passed through the quarantine line without clearance. Later in the afternoon again the Collangatta, was intercepted by the USS Perry and/allowed to proceed.



During

the afternoon tightened security measures went into effect at the Pentagon. At 6:00 p.m. the first of the propoganda

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

168

leaflets directed at the Cuban people began to roll off the presses.

Salinger's statement on the continuing missile construction activity was read to reporters at 6:15 p.m. It said:

The development of ballistic missile sites in Cuba continues at a rapid pace. Through the process of continued surveillance, directed by the President, additional evidence has been acquired which clearly reflects that as of Thursday, Oct. 25, defense build-ups in these offensive missile sites continued to be made.

The activity at these sites apparently is directed at achieving a full operational capability as soon as possible.

There is evidence that as of yesterday, Oct. 25, considerable construction activity was being engaged in at the intermediate range ballistic missile sites. Bulldozers and cranes were observed as late as Thursday actively clearing new areas within the sites and improving the approach roads to the launch pads.

Since Tuesday, Oct. 23, missile-related activities have continued at the medium range ballistic missile sites resulting in progressive refinements at these facilities.

For example, missiles were observed parked in the open on Oct. 23. Surveillance on Oct. 25 revealed that some of these same missiles have now moved from their original parked positions.

Cabling can be seen running from missile-ready tents to powered generators near-by.

In summary, there is no evidence to date indicating that there is any intention to dismantle or discontinue work on these missile sites.

On the contrary the Soviets are rapidly continuing their construction of missile support and launch facilities and serious attempts are under way to camouflage their efforts.

169

That evening U Thant made public the text of messages he had sent to Khrushchev and Kennedy and the replies he had received from each. In his letters to the two heads of government U Thant expressed his "grave concern" about the possible "confrontation at sea between Soviet ships and United States vessels." He urged both sides to take steps to avoid such a confrontation. The letter to Khrushchev was sent on the 25th; the parallel letter to Kennedy the morning of the 26th.

In his reply Khrushchev accepted the U Thant proposal, saying he had "ordered the masters of Soviet vessels bound for Cuba but not yet within the range of the American warships' piratical activities to stay out of the reception area, as you recommend."

The President's letter of reply was hedged to keep the ball in the other court. He wrote:

If the Soviet Government accepts and abides by your request "that Soviet ships already on their way to Cuba \*\*\* stay away from the interception area" for the limited time required for preliminary discussion, you may be assured that this Government will accept and abide by your request that our vessels in the Caribbean "do every-



~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~

170

thing possible to avoid direct confrontation with Soviet ships in the next few days in order to minimize the risk of any untoward incident."

I must inform you, however, that this is a matter of great urgency in view of the fact that certain Soviet ships are still proceeding toward Cuba and the interception area.

I share your hope that Chairman Khrushchev will also heed your appeal and that we can then proceed urgently to meet the requirements that these offensive military systems in Cuba be withdrawn, in order to end their threat to peace. I must point out to you that present work on these systems is still continuing.

U Thant also served as the channel to Castro, the odd man out in this drama. In a letter to the Cuban leader on October 26 the Secretary General renewed the appeal he had made before the Security Council two days before: "Your Excellency can make a significant contribution to the peace of the world at this present critical juncture by directing that the construction and development of major military facilities and installations designed to launch medium-range and intermediate-range ballistic missiles, be suspended during the period of negotiations which are now underway."

Castro's reply came the next day and proved to be a hedged

~~TOP SECRET~~~~EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

171

acceptance. He rejected "the presumption of the U.S. to determine what action we are entitled to take within our country, what kind of arms we consider appropriate for our defense." Cuba was prepared to accept "the compromises that you request as efforts in favor of peace, provided that at the same time, while negotiations are in progress, the United States Government desists from threats and aggressive actions against Cuba, including naval blockade of the country." Read literally, Castro was saying that he would consider the suspension only at the price of ending the quarantine. At the same time his letter contained this offer: ".....Should you consider it useful to the cause of peace, our government would be glad to receive you in our country, as Secretary General of the UN, with a view to direct discussions on the present crisis."

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

Soviet Embassy Offer Made Through Newsmen

One of the first signs of an apparent crack in the Soviet diplomatic posture took an unusual form. The immediate circumstances were these. Aleksander Fomin, Counselor of the Soviet Embassy in Washington, from time to time had lunch with John Scali, ABC correspondent assigned to the State Department. The morning of the <sup>26th</sup> Fomin phoned Scali and urgently requested an appointment for lunch. At lunch, Fomin asked if the U.S. Government would be interested in a settlement of the Cuban crisis along the following lines:

- 1) Missile bases to be dismantled under UN supervision;
- 2) Castro to pledge not to accept offensive weapons in the future; and
- 3) U.S. to give a pledge not to invade Cuba.

Fomin asked Scali to check this formula with the State Department and to let him know the reaction as soon as

173.

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

possible. He pointed out that the Cuban delegate in the Security Council had previously asked for such no- invasion assurances in return for dismantling, but had received no reply.

Scali hastened to the State Department where he met with Roger Hilsman and Secretary Rusk. A check of the Security Council debates was made. The closest to what Fomin had in mind appeared to be the statement by Sr. Garcia-Inchaustegui on October 23, which quoted a previous statement by Dorticos as follows:

"Were the United States able to give us proof, by word and deed, that it would not carry out aggression against our country, then we declare solemnly before you here and now, our weapons would be unnecessary and our army redundant."

A response to Fomin's offer was prepared by State and cleared at the White House. Scali met Fomin a second time at 7:45 p.m., October 26, and made the following statement:

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

"I have reason to believe that the United States Government sees real possibilities in this and supposes that the representatives of the USSR and the United States in New York can work this matter out with U Thant and with each other. My definite impression is that time is very urgent and that time is very short." (sic)

Fomin asked several times if this came from high sources and Scali replied that it came from very high sources.

Fomin asked whether it would be possible to have UN inspectors also check American military bases in Florida and surrounding Caribbean countries. Scali replied that this was a new element and he had no official information. However, Scali said, he felt it would raise a terrible complication for President Kennedy in a period when time was of the essence.

Fomin said that this information would be communicated to the highest Soviet sources and simultaneously to Zorin, whereupon Fomin left in obvious haste.

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

175.

Offers similar to that made by Fomin, though less specific and detailed, had also been made at the U.N., and, 48 hours earlier, by the Soviet Ambassador to Indonesia.

At six that evening the State Department telegraph center logged receipt of the first take of a long letter from Khrushchev to the President. It had been translated by the U.S. Embassy staff in Moscow before transmittal. During the next several hours three additional sections of the letter arrived, making four takes in all. It was this letter, which has never been published, that contained the particulars of the Soviet offer that made possible a settlement of the crisis.

The letter was long and like all Khrushchev's correspondence, argumentative. It repeated the Soviet stock phrases accusing the U.S. of criminal acts and piracy, and

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

upheld the oft-reiterated Soviet thesis that the missiles in Cuba had a defensive purpose. However, embedded in the rhetoric were a number of sentences which amounted to a volte face by the Kremlin. None of the sentences were clear-cut and concrete. They were, however, liable to the interpretation that they constituted an offer to settle the crisis on terms which the United States was willing to accept. One key section of the letter read as follows:

"If assurances were given by the President and the government of the United States that the USA itself would not participate in an attack on Cuba and would restrain others from actions of this sort, if you would recall your fleet, this would immediately change everything. I am not speaking for Fidel Castro, but I think that he and the government of Cuba, evidently, would declare demobilization and would appeal to the people to get down to peaceful labor. Then, too, the question of armaments would disappear, since, if there is no threat, then armaments are a burden for every people. Then, too, the question of the destruction, not only of the armaments which you call offensive, but

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

of all other armaments as well, would look different."

Another paragraph, phrased as a specific proposal but studiously vague on the Soviet end of the bargain, was this from the fourth take of the letter:

"Let us therefore show statesmanlike wisdom. I propose: we, for our part, will declare that our ships, bound for Cuba, will not carry any kind of armaments. You would declare that the United States will not invade Cuba with its forces and will not support any sort of forces which might intend to carry out an invasion of Cuba. Then the necessity for the presence of our military specialists in Cuba would disappear."

As the letter came in it was given intent scrutiny by Excomm members at State and Defense and by the President. The Excomm reconvened at 10 p.m. at the White House to discuss it.

There were long sections of the letter in which Khrushchev's attitudes did not seem to have deflected from his previous utterances. He failed to accept the U.S.

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

distinction between offensive and defensive weapons -- clinging instead to his locution "the weapons which you call offensive." He did not spell out clearly and concretely an offer to dismantle and/or remove the missiles from Cuba. He raised the consideration that Castro's consent would be needed to remove the weapons. As a condition of the settlement he asked that the US in effect guarantee the security of the Castro regime -- a condition certain to cause political difficulties domestically, at least in the long run.

But more important in the eyes of the President and the Excomm was the fact that the letter did not condition withdrawal of the missiles on a quid pro quo fulfillment of Soviet demands in other parts of the world such as Berlin,

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

179.

elimination of U.S. bases, or, most importantly, the Jupiters in Italy and Turkey. Accordingly, a consensus was reached that a reply should be sent to Khrushchev treating the letter as a bona fide offer. Drafting work on the reply commenced late that night at the State Department and the White House.

Bertrand

That evening the President's reply to/Russell's appeal was sent and made public. In it Kennedy pressed the theme that it was strange to criticize those who caught the burglars, rather than the burglars themselves.

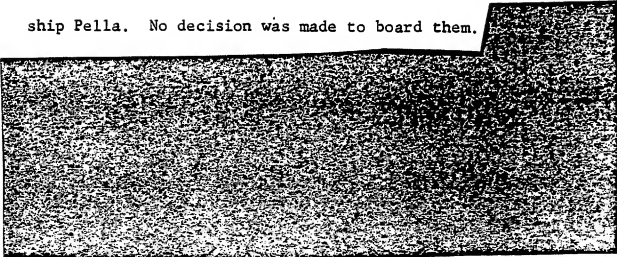
Saturday, October 27: Grim News, Conflicting Signals

Saturday morning began on the high seas. Two navy ships were ordered to intercept and trail the Soviet ship Grozny, and another was ordered to intercept the Lebanese

~~TOP SECRET~~  
EYES ONLY

56

ship Pella. No decision was made to board them.



The Excomm met at 10 a.m. The intelligence summary contained the information that work on the missile bases appeared to be continuing. The discussion then turned to the draft reply to the Khrushchev letter.

At that very moment Radio Moscow was broadcasting the text of a new message from Khrushchev. Unlike the private letter of the previous evening, this one contained a serious catch. In language more explicit than the letter, this message spelled out a quid pro quo offer:

~~TOP SECRET~~  
EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

181.

"We agree to remove those weapons from Cuba which you regard as offensive weapons. We agree to do this and to state in the United Nations this commitment. Your representatives will make a statement to the effect that the United States on its part, bearing in mind the anxiety and concern of the Soviet state, will evacuate its analogous weapons from Turkey."

He also stated more clearly the role of the Castro regime (and, by extension, the government of Turkey):

"Of course, the authorization of the Governments of Cuba and of Turkey is necessary for ... the inspection of the fulfillment of the pledge made by either side."

Khrushchev continued to term the missiles "defensive"

and added:

"The weapons in Cuba that you have mentioned and which you say alarm you are in the hands of Soviet officers. Therefore, any whatsoever accidental use of them to the detriment of the United States is excluded."

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

182

While Radio Moscow was on the air with this disquieting message, a U-2 flown by Air Force Major Rudolph Anderson was shot down over eastern Cuba. At the other side of the world an American U-2 on an air sampling mission in the Arctic accidentally overflowed the Chokut peninsula on the eastern part of the USSR, due to navigational difficulties. Soviet fighters scrambled from a base near Wrangel Island to intercept the stray. Within another hour one of the low-flying reconnaissance planes encountered artillery and small arms fire from ground stations in Cuba. In a television broadcast from Havana, Fidel Castro shouted defiance of the United States and vowed to shoot down planes that violated Cuba's air space.

These were the tensest hours. The hopes that had risen from the previous evening's letter were largely dashed. Instead of an offer, conciliatory in tone, which the U.S. could honorably accept, the ExComm and President were being asked publicly to bargain away the security of a close ally and,

183.

with it, a part of NATO's nuclear shield. While the Jupiters in Turkey had lost much of their military value, as had been recognized in the memorandum from the International Security Affairs staff at the Defense Department, they were of great symbolic importance to a stout ally, as well as to NATO. Evacuating these bases under duress would call into question the U.S. commitment to Europe's defenses and could seriously shake the Western alliance. At the same time it was recognized that Khrushchev's offer had an obvious appeal to many nations, especially the neutrals, and to the people everywhere who were willing to grasp any straw to get out of what was widely viewed as a nuclear impasse.

The obvious conflicts in the substance and tone of the Khrushchev messages were puzzling. Several theories were advanced to explain them. Most likely, it was felt, there were competing groups within the Kremlin. One group viewed the Cuban missile venture as a gamble that failed and was willing to pull out as quickly as possible in the hope

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

that escalation towards nuclear war would be avoided. The other, bolder, group considered it worth trying to exact a price for removal of the missiles. The missiles were obviously irritating to the United States. Why remove them without getting something in exchange? It was also suggested perhaps less seriously, that the Kremlin had not thought at first of linking the missiles with U.S. overseas bases, but that after this had been suggested by leading western figures such as Walter Lippmann and Austrian Foreign Minister Bruno Kreisky, Khrushchev thought it was worth a try -- like an Odessa merchant who's willing to/ accept a lower price but wants to see, even as an afterthought, whether he can't squeeze a bit more out of the bargain.

After much discussion a tentative decision was made by the President, He would pick out of the earlier, private Khrushchev letter those sections which provided the basis for a satisfactory solution. He would say that those proposals

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

56

185

EYES ONLY

were generally acceptable -- and ignore the rest. At the same time a public statement would be issued commenting on the unacceptable terms of the broadcast statement and reiterating the fundamentals of the U.S. position.

(The decision to interpret the mixture of signals from the Kremlin in such a positive way has since been described as the "Trollope ploy," after the 19th Century English novelist in whose stories more than one maiden purposely and with foresight interpreted an amorous advance by a would-be swain as a proposal of marriage -- though the young man did not have so permanent a proposition in mind.)

Several Exoomm members assembled at 2:30 p.m. in George Ball's Conference Room. It was a pessimistic group. They discussed ways to bring the confrontation back towards political arrangements, talking in terms of a "bridge back."

~~TOP SECRET~~

EYES ONLY



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

186

One participant suggested that exempting the bombers from our demands would leave Khrushchev a face-saving way out. The problem uppermost in everyone's mind had veered away from the dangers of boarding a Soviet ship at sea to the consequences of having U.S. reconnaissance planes shot down. Low level flights were going over Cuba at two-hour intervals night and day. What if several were knocked out that afternoon or the next day? Detailed consideration was given to the timing and implications of a possible air strike. The post-strike situation would plainly be grim. There was no telling what the Soviet response might be. Nor could we count on the support of our allies.

At 3:15 the State Department announced the CLEARCERT procedures to enable vessels to transit waters near Cuba without running afoul of the quarantine. Instructions on CLEARCERT were communicated to embassies and consulates in

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

areas with shipping interests.

At 3:35 the Pentagon issued a statement explaining the legal and diplomatic basis for the presence of the Jupiters in Turkey pursuant to a NATO Council resolution of December, 1957. The Defense spokesman also said that one of our U-2's was missing over Cuba and presumed lost, and stated that any interference with our surveillance of Cuba will meet counter-action.

At 4:00 p.m. the President called the Excomm back to the White House to review the proposed replies to Khrushchev. McNamara reported that two low-level reconnaissance planes flying over Cuba had been fired on by light anti-aircraft and small arms. After brief discussion the President approved the two messages to Khrushchev. It was decided to make both public, though the letter would be delayed until later in the evening. Although Khrushchev's letter had been private, it was considered important that the full terms of the U.S. offer be known to the

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

American people and the allies, as well as the Soviet leaders.

The President decided not to say anything about the accidental U-2 flight over the USSR unless the Soviets publicized it -- which they did not do until the next day. He also ordered further air reconnaissance over Cuba despite the downed U-2 and the reports of ground fire.

Salinger's statement was issued at 4:35 p.m. It referred to "several inconsistent and conflicting proposals" made by the Soviets, and concluded:

"As to the proposals concerning the security of nations outside this hemisphere the U. S. and its allies have long taken the lead in seeking properly inspected arms limitation on both sides. These efforts can continue as soon as the present Soviet-created threat is ended."

It did not shut the door to negotiations on bases -- within the context of arms control -- but it made plain that no such discussions were possible until the missiles were removed.

At 4:00 p.m. CINCLANT was advised that the circular areas of 500 nautical miles radius centered on Havana and Cape Maysi had been designated as the reception area for the quarantine.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

A bit later all sea commands were provided with a cover plan for movement of forces through the Panama Canal.

After final polishing, the letter to Khrushchev was despatched at 8:05 p.m., having been sent to U Thant half an hour earlier. The letter was phrased with great care, since it was recognized that it might form part of the contractual basis for a settlement. It read in part:

As I read your letter, the key elements of your proposals -- which seem generally acceptable as I understand them -- are as follows:

1) You would agree to remove these weapons systems from Cuba under appropriate United Nations observation and supervision: and undertake, with suitable safe-guards, to halt the further introduction of such weapons systems into Cuba.

2) We, on our part, would agree -- upon the establishment of adequate arrangements through the United Nations, to ensure the carrying out and continuation of these commitments-- (a) to remove promptly the quarantine measures now in effect and (b) to give assurances against the invasion of Cuba. I am confident that other nations of the Western Hemisphere would be prepared to do likewise.

Another Excomm session was convened at 9:00. Its main purpose was to have the President approve the calling up of 24 Air Force reserve squadrons, which he did. There was also

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

56

a short review of the events of the day and a discussion of additional steps to be taken the next day -- such as extending the blockade to POL, mobilizing U.S. merchant ships, or/<sup>a</sup>possible air strike at the missiles.

At the State Department a message was received from U Thant that Zorin had refused to receive information about the reception area. The Department also received a copy of Castro's reply to U Thant rejecting the proposal that missile bases be dismantled and demanding immediate halt of the quarantine.

At 9:20 p.m. Secretary McNamara met the press at the Pentagon. He stated that one of our unarmed U-2's had been fired on and said:

"The possibility of further attack on our aircraft and the continued buildup of the offensive weapons systems in Cuba require that we be prepared for any eventuality. Therefore....I have instructed the Secretary of the Air Force to order to active duty 24 troop carrier squadrons of the Air Force reserve with their associated support units."

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

Late that night instructions were sent to Ambassador Finletter for a special meeting of the NATO Council, to report on actions taken thus far and to review with NATO the problems arising out of Khrushchev's public letter. Letters from the President were sent to deGaulle and Adenauer.

During the day approximately 5 million leaflets for Cuba had been printed and loaded into containers. The order to drop them was never given.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

192.

Sunday, October 28: The Tension Breaks

Sunday morning dawned bright and warm in Washington, a glorious fall day. The city had had an extra hour of sleep due to the return to standard time. At the Pentagon business began much as usual. The names of the air force reserve units to be called up were released. Orders were issued to intercept another Soviet ship. The 5th Marine Expeditionary Brigade embarked at West Coast ports and headed towards the Caribbean via the Panama Canal.

Suddenly the teletypes began to chatter. A few minutes before 10:00 a.m. Radio Moscow announced it would have an important announcement on the hour. It was the text of a new Khrushchev message, which was delivered to the U. S. Embassy in Moscow ten minutes after the start of the broadcast -- 7:00 p.m. in Moscow. The full text was available

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

to the Excomm when it convened at the White House at 11.

A copy had been sent by Khrushchev to U Thant. The most pertinent passages read:

"... the Soviet Government, in addition to earlier instructions on the discontinuation of further work on weapons construction sites, has given a new order to dismantle the weapons, which you describe as offensive, and to crate and return them to the Soviet Union."

"I regard with respect and trust the statement you made in your message on October 27 that there would be no attack, no invasion of Cuba, and not only on the part of the United States, but also on the part of other nations of the Western Hemisphere, as you have said in the same message as yours ..."

"It is for this reason that we instructed our officers (these means as I had already informed you earlier are in the hands of Soviet officers) to take appropriate measures to discontinue the construction of the aforementioned facilities, to dismantle them and to return them to the Soviet Union... We are prepared to reach agreement to enable representatives of the UN to verify the dismantling of these means."

A reply to this message was prepared, discussed, approved, and sent, without even waiting for an official copy of the message. It read:

"I consider my letter to you of October 27 and your reply of today as firm undertakings on the part of

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY



194.

both our governments which should be promptly carried out. I hope that the necessary measures can at once be taken through the United Nations as your message says, so that the United States in turn can remove the quarantine measures not in effect. I have already made arrangements to report all these matters to the Organization of American States, whose members share a deep interest in a genuine peace in the Caribbean area...

"I agree with you that we must devote urgent attention to the problem of disarmament...I think we should give priority to questions relating to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, on earth and in outer space, and to the great effort for a nuclear test ban. But we should also work hard to see if wider measures of disarmament can be agreed and put into operation at an early date. The United States Government will be prepared to discuss these questions urgently, and in a constructive spirit, at Geneva or elsewhere."

A public statement was issued later the same day welcoming

the Khrushchev response and stating:

"We shall be in touch with the Secretary General of the UN with respect to reciprocal measures to assure the peace in the Caribbean area."

There was a deep sense of relief in the Excomm, though not without reservations. The President said that, while the message was welcome news, it contained some disquieting

195.

~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

56

elements and, above all, it remained to be implemented.

Obviously, serious hitches could arise in connection with such an operation as dismantling, withdrawal, and inspection of the missiles. The message had not mentioned the IL-28 bombers; these must be gotten out too. Khrushchev's reference to "earlier instructions" to cease work on the missiles was puzzling, as no such cessation had been observed. Certainly it was not a time for gloating, nor could one draw general conclusions about the future course of Soviet conduct.

(Remarks much along these lines were made by Secretary Rusk to reporters who gathered quickly at 1 p.m. for a background briefing at the State Department.) The President also decided that the quarantine would remain in effect, with U.S. ships on

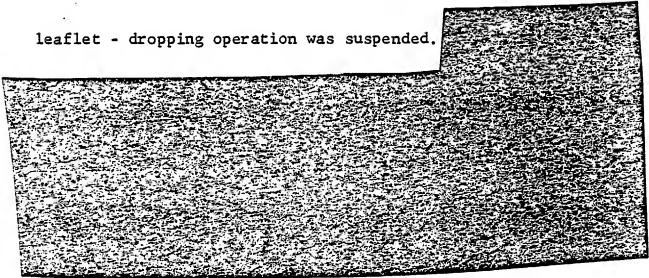
~~TOP SECRET~~ EYES ONLY

196.

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

station, until arrangements had been made for adequate inspection. He also directed that aerial reconnaissance should continue.

Nonetheless, the basic tone of the Administration was optimism that morning. Orders were quickly given at the Pentagon to halt any forceful action against shipping. The leaflet - dropping operation was suspended.



At 5.00 pm Secretary Rusk met with the Latin American ambassadors to brief them on the latest developments. At 5.40 a letter was received from U Thant stating his understanding of the agreement that had been reached. The

~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

197.

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~EYES ONLY~~

President replied confirming the lines along which a satisfactory settlement could be reached. Later in the evening the Secretary General informed Castro that he accepted his invitation to go to Cuba with his aides to work out a solution.

~~TOP SECRET~~ ~~EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

-198-

~~EYES ONLY~~

56

EPILOGUE

The 28th of October was not, of course, the end of the story. In one sense it was the beginning -- of negotiations which ultimately dragged on until the turn of the year. It soon became evident that the solving the missile crisis did not solve the problem of Castro. Already on the 28th Castro had issued his "Statement of Conditions," including the demands that the U.S. cease "violations of air and naval space" (i.e., reconnaissance) of Cuba; end "all measures of commercial and economic pressure;" and withdraw from the Guantanamo naval base and return it to Cuba. Unless all his conditions were met, Castro insisted, he would not permit any inspection or verification in Cuba of the missile withdrawal. It was against this background that U Thant and a party of nineteen, including Brigadier General Rikhye and a small military staff, flew to Havana.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

56

-199-

Meanwhile, on October 29, President Kennedy named a three man committee headed by John McCloy to assist Ambassador Stevenson in working out the details of the missile withdrawal in negotiations with Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vasily Kuznetsov and, later, Deputy Premier Anastas I. Mikoyan. The main subjects in these discussions were the modalities for checking and inspecting the withdrawal of the missiles (and further incoming Soviet shipments to Cuba); the role of the International Committee of the Red Cross; the nature of the additional U.S. and Soviet pledges; the continuation of aerial reconnaissance; and other long-term arrangements. Mikoyan flew from Moscow to Havana on November 2 in what turned out to be a fruitless effort to get Castro to agree<sup>to</sup>/on-site inspection. As it turned out, proposals to have the ICRC handle the inspection chores came to nothing, and a procedure was worked out by which the U.S. Navy was able to observe and

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~

count the departing Soviet missiles.



Meanwhile a highly private exchange of letters was underway between Kennedy and Khrushchev. It was a continuation of the correspondence exchanged during the week ending the 28th; both leaders indicated that they valued this channel of communication and hoped it could be kept open -- and private. The letters generally reflected the New York negotiations; whenever those talks hit a snag, there would be resort to the private channel, as it came to be known. (The letters themselves had a tightly limited distribution in the U.S. government and

~~TOP SECRET~~

56

~~EYES ONLY~~

-201-

were seen by few people outside the membership of the Excomm. There is one set in Secretary Rusk's files.)

As a result of this correspondence an agreement was reached under which the U.S. would lift the quarantine and the Soviets would remove the IL-28's. This was announced on November 20 by the President, who went on to say:

"As for our part, if all offensive weapons are removed from Cuba and kept out of the hemisphere in the future, under adequate verification and safeguards, and if Cuba is not used for the export of aggressive Communist purposes, there will be peace in the Caribbean. And, as I said in September, 'we shall neither initiate nor permit aggression in this hemisphere.'"

The Soviet Government carried out its promise to remove the IL-28's, and by December 6 informed the U.S. that all of them (42 in number) had left. But virtually no progress was made in achieving the "adequate international arrangements for the task of inspection and verification in Cuba" that the President had mentioned on November 20, and which were part of the original

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~



~~TOP SECRET EYES ONLY~~

-202-

56

understanding. Mikoyan's three-hour conversations with the President on November 29 and with Secretary Rusk on the 30th did not advance the discussions significantly. It became apparent finally that further settlement of the outstanding issues would remain elusive, and in the end a formula to terminate the discussions and to remove the issue from the Security Council's agenda was reached. It represented a standstill, rather than a final settlement, and to an extent was an agreement to disagree. On January 7 the two governments sent a joint letter to the Secretary General which he then transmitted to the Council. On the same day the Cuban representative also addressed a letter to the Security Council, reiterating the Five Points of Castro's statement of Conditions, and seeking to pin on the United States the blame for failure to achieve a final solution to the issue.

~~TOP SECRET~~

~~EYES ONLY~~